



Committee: Senate Environment & Public Works Committee

Event: [Business Meeting](#)

Date: July 15, 2026

Executive Summary:

On July 15, 2026, the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee marked up the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2026 ([S. 4949](#)). The Committee's discussion on the bill demonstrated the strong bipartisan nature of the package. **The bill was reported, as amended, to the full Senate with a 18-0 vote.**

I. Member Toplines:¹

Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV): Capito emphasized that the WRDA bill authorizes new U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) studies and projects and expands authorities to improve project delivery nationwide. She underscored the importance of provisions authorizing support for flood risk management and drinking water and wastewater infrastructure projects for small communities across the country, including in West Virginia. She highlighted the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provisions to strengthen underserved communities' ability to deliver water infrastructure projects and prioritize safe and reliable water systems. She also highlighted increased funding for the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs), cybersecurity resources for water systems, and water workforce development support.

Ranking Member Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI): Whitehouse emphasized the importance of SRFs, pointing out that the WRDA bill increases their authorizations to help address lead service lines and PFAS contamination. He noted that the bill also establishes a pilot program to install point-of-use filtration systems in households to help further mitigate PFAS and lead exposure. He also highlighted that the bill authorizes nearly \$7 billion in EPA funding for water utility cybersecurity, assistance to small and disadvantaged communities, and microplastics remediation efforts.

[Sen. John Curtis \(R-UT\):](#) Curtis stated that water scarcity remains a top priority for Utah amid the state's record drought and praised the bill for supporting critical clean water infrastructure projects.

Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR): Merkley highlighted the bill's benefits for Oregon, including support for Columbia River Basin restoration efforts. He expressed support for provisions that address toxic pollution and research on microplastics and nanoplastics, arguing that plastic pollution has become both an environmental and public health challenge

¹Certain opening statements were not available at the time of this memo's distribution.

Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK): Sullivan highlighted Alaska's unique infrastructure challenges, emphasizing the importance of WRDA investments to reduce costs and support communities across the state with limited road access. He praised provisions accelerating flood mitigation efforts in Juneau, improving resilience along the coast of western Alaska, and providing resources for USACE to address Alaska-specific needs. He also highlighted EPA water and sewer funding for Alaska Native communities.

[*Sen. Angela Alsobrooks \(D-MD\):*](#) Alsobrooks underscored the bill's reauthorization and strengthening of drinking water and wastewater programs, which she said will help communities modernize aging infrastructure and protect public health.

Sen. Jon Husted (R-OH): Husted thanked the Committee for including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in the bill and emphasized the importance of protecting the Great Lakes as an essential freshwater resource.

Sen. Alex Padilla (D-CA): Padilla urged the committee to use USACE'S completed reevaluation study to increase fund authorizations for critical flood protection work for the cities of Temecula and Murrieta. He also raised concerns about approval delays from the Office of Management and Budget and EPA for water infrastructure loan applications and praised provisions improving transparency around loan processing timelines.

II. Amendments

- Manager 01 - Package of amendments agreed upon by the Chairman and Ranking Member.
 - **The amendment was approved by voice vote.**
- Blunt Rochester, Padilla 01 - Establishes a water affordability program within EPA, modeled after the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
 - Sen. **Lisa Blunt Rochester** (D-DE) argued that the WRDA bill does not adequately address the nation's growing water affordability crisis. She highlighted rising water rates – driven by aging infrastructure and increasing operational costs – stating that the proposed water affordability program, modeled after LIHEAP, would provide financial relief to households while creating a reliable revenue stream for water utilities.
 - Padilla emphasized that rising water and wastewater costs are a nationwide challenge for working families, noting that rates have increased at twice the rate of inflation over the past 25 years. He highlighted the success of the pandemic-era assistance program, which helped 1.4 million households avoid water shutoffs or restore service. He argued that improving water affordability would benefit both households and utilities.
 - Capito pledged to continue working with her colleagues on solutions to address water affordability.
 - Whitehouse highlighted that the financial pressures facing water utilities are also partly attributed to climate change. He noted that flooding caused by sea level rise and extreme rainfall require costly infrastructure investments in states like Rhode Island and Delaware, while drought and water shortages in western

states are increasing competition for limited supplies and driving up costs. He expressed support for using LIHEAP as a model to address water affordability.

- **The amendment was withdrawn.**

III. The bill was approved by the committee as amended.