



Construction Industry Round Table

Legislative News

A force for positive change in the design / construction industry

4/01/2015 – Businesses Urge Congress to Streamline Regulatory Process

Permit Streamlining legislation, known as the RAPID Act (H.R. 348), has been marked-up by the full House Judiciary Committee and will be sent on to the House floor soon. Later this spring the full Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee is scheduled to markup its version of Permit Streamlining. This is the first time there will be a real opportunity to pass permit streamlining legislation in both Houses of Congress and send it to the President. A large coalition, led by the U.S. Chamber, is urging support and passage of this initiative as a means to curb the seemingly endless federal government appetite for burdensome, redundant, and overlapping rulemakings that sap the economy and are a drag on job creation.

The RAPID Act is designed to streamline the environmental permitting process in several important ways:

- Coordinating responsibilities among multiple agencies involved in environmental reviews to ensure that “the trains run on time”;
- Providing for concurrent reviews by agencies, rather than serial reviews;
- Allowing state-level environmental reviews to be used where the state has done a competent job, thereby avoiding needless duplication of state work by federal reviewers;
- Requiring that agencies involve themselves in the process early and comment early, avoiding eleventh-hour objections that can restart the entire review timetable;
- Establishing a reasonable process for determining the scope of project alternatives, so that the environmental review does not become an endless quest to review infeasible alternatives;
- Imposing reasonable fixed deadlines for completion of an EIS or EA; and
- Reducing the statute of limitations to challenge a final EIS or EA from six years to 180 days.

The RAPID Act is modeled after existing permit streamlining provisions for transportation and stimulus projects, *which CIRT was an early and strong advocate*. These permit streamlining provisions have cut the amount of time needed to secure transportation project approvals in half. The RAPID Act would help projects move forward, creating millions of jobs and growing the economy. **[NOTE:** Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI), Chair of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, is scheduled to address CIRT at its 2015 Spring Meeting in Washington, DC later this month].