

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 24, 2016

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Boxer, Chairman Shuster, and Ranking Member DeFazio:

As you work to finalize the Water Resources Development Act of 2016 (WRDA 2016), we write to urge you to retain Section 3004, "Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dams," which was included in the Senate version of the bill. This provision is based on a bipartisan bill (S. 2835) that we joined in introducing earlier this year and has the support of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO).

High hazard potential dams are those dams where failure is probable to cause loss of human life and endanger population centers and ecosystems. According to the ASDSO, the number of high-hazard potential dams increased nationally from 9,281 in 1998 to more than 14,700 in 2013. While there is limited authority to repair some agricultural dams, there is no federal program to support the repair of thousands of non-federal, non-agricultural dams throughout the country. For every dollar spent on pre-disaster mitigation, four dollars is saved in post-disaster relief. By assisting in the repair or removal of high hazard dams before they fail, this initiative would be an investment in future cost savings, not to mention lives and property saved.


The Section 3004 dam safety provision will help address these risks by expanding FEMA's existing National Dam Safety Program to allow non-federal entities to apply for matching grants for the repair and removal of non-federal, non-agricultural, non-hydroelectric small dams that have been identified by a state dam safety agency as a high hazard potential. States would determine which dams they would seek assistance for and their participation and oversight is required to ensure that the repairs address the risk. Funding would be allocated to

states on a one-third equal distribution and two-thirds need-based competitive formula, to ensure the participation of the widest number of states.

We appreciate the support and attention this issue has received, particularly the strong statements made by Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer about Section 3004 during the debate on WRDA 2016. We look forward to working with you to see that the "Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dams" provision is retained in the final version of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important public safety priority.

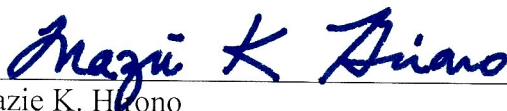
Sincerely,



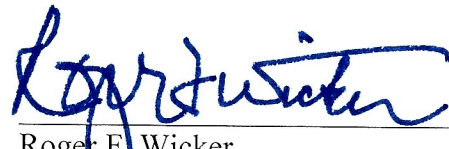
Jack Reed
United States Senator



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator




Mazie Hirono
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Lindsey Graham
United States Senator