

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000
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March 3, 2015

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Carper:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting, and defending America's free enterprise system, strongly supports S. 280, the "Federal Permitting Improvement Act of 2015."

This critical, bipartisan legislation would provide a streamlined process for developers to obtain environmental permits and approvals for their projects in a timely and efficient manner, allowing jobs to be created and the economy to grow. The Chamber applauds Sens. Portman and McCaskill for crafting this important bill, which is among our top regulatory reform priorities.

Every year that major projects are stalled or cancelled because of a dysfunctional permitting process and a system that allows limitless challenges by opponents of development, millions of jobs are not created. For example, 351 stalled energy projects reviewed in one 2010 study had a total economic value of over \$1 trillion and represented 1.9 million American jobs that were not created.

The Federal Permitting Improvement Act of 2015 would improve the environmental review and permitting process by:

- 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 devolve into an endless quest to evaluate infeasible alternatives; and

- Reducing the statute of limitations to challenge an environmental review under NEPA from six years to 150 days.

S. 280 is a practical, industry-wide approach that builds on successful provisions for environmental review management found in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), and Section 1609 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The Federal Permitting Improvement Act of 2015 also embodies the procedural improvements to the environmental review process repeatedly called for by the Obama administration.

This bill would address the problem far too many projects face today: lengthy project delays from endless environmental reviews and challenges result in lost opportunities to create jobs and grow the economy. Every year of delay results in millions of jobs not created. The creation of millions of jobs is worth ensuring that our government works faster and more efficiently.

The Chamber strongly supports S. 280, the “Federal Permitting Improvement Act of 2015,” and encourages you to support this bill during the Committee’s mark up of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten", written in a cursive style.

R. Bruce Josten

cc: Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs