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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6175

October 30, 2025

The Honorable Adam Telle
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Telle:

As members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, we write to oppose the Administration's plan to pause or cancel U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects exclusively in blue states.[1] This shortsighted attempt to strongarm Democratic lawmakers implodes longstanding foundations of unbiased decision making in the execution of the Corps' civil works program, threatens to undermine the bipartisan support necessary to advance the Water Resources Development Act, and ultimately will hurt red and blue states alike.

While your office has refused to provide additional information on the plan, the Office of Management and Budget indicates that projects will be paused in an effort to "reorient" how the federal government prioritizes Corps projects.[2] Unilaterally pausing or cancelling the expenditure of funds appropriated for specific projects usurps Congress' constitutional authority to control how the government spends federal dollars. Worse still, OMB's talking points reveal that the Administration plans to reorient priorities not based on any objective criteria but for the sole purpose of exacting partisan political retribution.

The list of states with projects under review—California, Illinois, Maryland, New York, Oregon, New Mexico, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Delaware, and

[1] On October 17, Russell Vought, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, posted the following on X: "The Democrat shutdown has drained the Army Corps of Engineers' ability to manage billions of dollars in projects. The Corps will be immediately pausing over $11 billion in lower-priority projects & considering them for cancellation, including projects in New York, San Francisco, Boston, and Baltimore. More information to come from the Army Corps of Engineers."

[2] Ben Johansen, "White House pauses new round of largely blue-state projects" (Politico, October 17, 2025), https://www.politico.com/news/2025/10/17/white-house-pauses-new-round-of-largely-blue-state-projects-00613875; Miranda Willson, "White House halts $11B for water projects in blue states" (E&E News, October 17, 2025), https://www.eenews.net/articles/white-house-halts-11b-for-water-projects-in-blue-states/; Annie Grayer, "OMB says in talking points for Capitol Hill that Army Corps of Engineers funding freeze is to 'reorient' federal funding" (CNN, October 20, 2025), https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/trump-government-shutdown-news-10-20-25?post-id=cmgzbp1wq00113b6nbf0lr8ew.

Colorado—includes no state that voted for the President in the 2024 election.[3] The Administration asserts that the Corps "shouldn't be funding" projects to replace bridges in Massachusetts, provide fish passage facilities at Corps dams, or build wastewater treatment facilities in New York.[4] Yet, at the same time, the Corps is proceeding with projects to replace a bridge over Tenkiller Dam in Oklahoma,[5] restore habitat for pallid sturgeon in the Missouri River,[6] and build drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater facilities in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia.[7] The projects under review also include navigation improvements to support two of the top three busiest container ports in the United States,[8] as well as a major hub for the import and export of automobiles and specialized machinery used and produced by Midwest manufacturers.[9] Given the importance of these ports to the overall U.S. economy, the only explanation for designating the projects as "lower priority" is that they are located in regions represented by Democratic lawmakers.

Democratic jurisdictions may bear the brunt of the acute, direct harm inflicted by these tactics, but ultimately the country as a whole will suffer. The adverse effects of withdrawing funding for navigation improvements at the Ports of Long Beach, New York and New Jersey, and Baltimore will reverberate far beyond the local economies in southern California, the greater New York metropolitan area, and the Mid-Atlantic region—consumers, farmers, and manufacturers across the nation rely on global trade through these ports to flourish. Further, playing partisan political games with funding for Corps projects will erode longstanding, bipartisan support for the Water Resources Development Act and compromise the Senate's ability to pass the bill. The Administration will have to answer to Republican lawmakers and the President's voters when, for example, Tennessee's Chickamauga Lock replacement cannot be completed because Congress has not raised the maximum project cost limit.

As you oversee the Corps' operations, we strongly urge you to defend your agency against politically biased decision making. Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,

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[3] Johansen, Willson, *supra* note 2.
[4] Willson, Grayer, *supra* note 2.
[5] U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Tenkiller Bridge Replacement, https://www.swt.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Tenkiller-Bridge-Project/.
[6] Corps of Engineers, Army Corps of Engineers FY 25 Work Plan – Construction, https://usace.contentdm.oclc.org/utils/getfile/collection/p16021coll6/id/2548.
[7] U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2025 Construction – Environmental Infrastructure (EI) Work Plan, https://usace.contentdm.oclc.org/utils/getfile/collection/p16021coll6/id/2535.
[8] George Lauriat, "Top 20 North American Ports" (American Journal of Transportation, January 22, 2024), https://www.ajot.com/premium/ajot-top-20-north-american-ports.
[9] Maryland State Archives, Maryland Manual On-Line, Port of Baltimore, https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/port.html.

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