Table of Contents

U.S. Senate Date: Wednesday, July 15, 2026

Committee on Environment
and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

STATEMENT OF: PAGE:

THE HONORABLE SHELLY MOORE CAPITO, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA 3

THE HONORABLE SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND 8

BUSINESS MEETING

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

United States Senate

Committee on Environment and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m. in room 406, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Shelley Moore Capito [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Senators Capito, Whitehouse, Cramer, Lummis, Curtis, Sullivan, Ricketts, Wicker, Boozman, Husted, Merkley, Kelly, Padilla, Blunt Rochester, Alsobrooks.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Senator Capito. Good morning, everyone. This is a good day in the EPW Committee. It is a good day for me personally, because today, even though she is no longer with me, my mother would be 100 years old today. Her name was Shelley, so, happy birthday, Shelley.

I note the presence of a quorum, I will call this business meeting to order.

For information of the committee, Ranking Member Whitehouse and I will deliver our opening statements. Once we have sufficient attendance, we will immediately proceed to the consideration of the legislation. That would be 10 members, I believe.

After the vote, Senators who wish to be recognized to speak on the legislation or the nomination may do so.

Before we get started on today's agenda, I would like to take a moment to remember our good friend and influential member of the EPW Committee, that would be Senator Lindsey Graham. He was a fierce advocate for the people of South Carolina, and used his position on this committee to advance critical issues for his State.

On the water resources front, he tirelessly fought for improvements to the Port of Charleston, worked closely with the

Corps on studies and projects to address coastal storm flooding and inland flooding in the City of Charleston and the Charleston Peninsula, and partnered with his colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure needs across South Carolina were met.

He was also an advocate for nuclear energy and a champion for his State's nuclear energy industry.

He will be greatly missed by this committee, as we know he will be by the full body.

I would like to thank my colleagues for attending today's business meeting to consider S. 4949, the Water Resources Development Act of 2026. S. 4949 is a bipartisan legislation that consists of two divisions. Division A is our biennial Water Resources Legislation for the United States Corps of Engineers, and Division B reauthorizes water infrastructure programs and geographic programs under the purview of the EPA.

I would like to take a moment to sincerely thank Ranking Member Whitehouse and his great staff for his efforts on this important legislation. We have worked very well together.

In Division A, we authorized critical water resources studies and projects for the Corps to carry out across the Country and provided additional authorities to the Secretary of the Army when carrying out the civil works program. Since 2014, the EPW Committee has kept to a biennial schedule of passing bipartisan water resources bills. I am pleased that we are

continuing that track record today.

From a national perspective, Division A enables the timely and efficient delivery of Corps studies and projects. It enhances the Corps' ability to identify and carry out solutions that are tailored to the needs of each community, and preserves the role of non-Federal sponsors.

As you have heard me say before, we have received a significant number of requests from our colleagues on this legislation. Our staff has worked diligently over the past few months to address those results and those requests.

As a result, the legislation includes wins for States across the Country. I am going to take a few minutes to highlight some of the benefits for my home State of West Virginia. It authorizes two new feasibility studies so that the Corps can address flood risk in the northern and southern part of our State.

The bill provides support for future projects identified by the Corps' feasibility study for flood risk management in the Upper Guyandotte River Basin. It establishes new authorities for the Corps to help expedite the delivery of small but impactful water resource projects in our State, and enhances existing authorities that support drinking and wastewater projects.

The bill also directs the Corps to expedite the ongoing

feasibility study for the Kanawha River Basin as well as projects in Milton and at the Bluestone Dam in Hinton. I would like to briefly highlight some of the important provisions in Division B, which is focused on the EPA's water infrastructure programs and geographic programs.

The water programs that were last authorized in the IIJA will strengthen undeserved communities' ability to deliver water projects, reinforced the cooperative federalism principle embedded in our laws, and focus on outcomes that prioritize safe water and sound infrastructure. It is vital we continue to work across the aisle to provide solutions that ensure communities across the Country have access to safe and reliable water and sanitation services.

Improving my State's water infrastructure remains a top priority for me. This bill will help address the State's significant needs while ensuring that we provide the right tools and flexibility to address the unique circumstances faced by rural and small communities in my State.

Significantly, the bill increases the annual authorized funding levels for the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds, provides resources to address cybersecurity vulnerabilities in our water systems, you will recall we had a hearing on that issue, and supports the EPA's Water Workforce Development Initiatives.

The bill also reauthorizes the EPA's geographic programs, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the nominee, Kevin Lilly, whose nomination we will vote on at a later committee meeting. Mr. Lilly was nominated to be Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife at the U.S. Department of Interior.

Mr. Lilly brings decades of leadership experience gained from his time in the private sector, State government, the military, and most recently at the Department of Interior in the role of Assistant Secretary. In this role, he will provide senior policy leadership for both U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service, agencies that play a pivotal role in our conservation efforts, and bolstering recreation and tourism opportunities.

Mr. Lilly, in my opinion, is an excellent choice for this role. I look forward to supporting Mr. Lilly's nomination at a later committee meeting. I strongly encourage my colleagues to support our WRDA bill today.

With that, I will turn to Ranking Member Whitehouse for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Senator Capito follows:]

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Senator Whitehouse. Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is the first gathering of this committee since the death of Senator Graham. I want to join the Chairman in a brief reflection about Lindsey. For many of us, he was a genuine personal friend. People sometimes think that that is crazy, because they see our political disagreements.

But Lindsey never allowed our political disagreements, even vast ones, to interfere at all in our friendship. He never even put any pressure on me to diminish our areas of vast disagreement. We just enjoyed each other, and particularly enjoyed what I think was one of Lindsey's signal characteristics, which was his enterprising and curious willingness to try to expand the political zone of what is possible in the Senate.

He was not constrained by his party's political boundaries, and he hoped that I would not be constrained by my party's political boundaries. That kind of enterprise is kind of a gem around here.

Plus, he was just an unforgettably funny, affectionate, cheerful and intelligent friend. The Senate is both a dumber and a grimmer place without Lindsey Graham.

So, on to the topic of this business meeting, where we show

that sometimes the Senate can still work like it used to and like it is supposed to. I want to thank you, Madam Chair, particularly, for your leadership, your staff director, Adam, and his team for working with us to produce a truly strong, bipartisan water infrastructure package.

I would also like to thank Mayely Boyce, Ed Higgins, Pam Collins, Kara Allen and Dan Dudis on my staff for their tireless efforts to produce this bill. We were joking beforehand that Shelley and I were able to overcome the disability of our terrible staffs to pull this together because we are so individually wonderful.

[Laughter.]

Senator Whitehouse. And of course, the fact of the matter, when we are not teasing, is that Senators depend enormously on the quality of their staffs, and it was a lot of staff work on both sides of the aisle that has made this bill a success.

The Chairs and Ranking Members of the Water and Infrastructure Subcommittees are also owed our gratitude, and indeed, all members of the committee engaged constructively toward this success.

Our package consists of two parts, one that will authorize water projects by the Army Corps of Engineers, and the other that will reauthorize water programs at the Environmental Protection Agency. Congress is not known for completing tasks

on a regular schedule. Yet for over a decade, Congress has authorized Army Corps projects on a biennial cycle. I am proud that our committee is taking an important step to continue this longstanding streak.

Similarly, we have worked to carry forward the momentum of five years ago when we authorized many important programs for water infrastructure at EPA. I strongly encourage all members to support this water package. Like any bipartisan bill, it doesn't contain everything Democrats would want, or everything Republicans would want.

Even still, it contains substantial wins. It contains reforms from my Elevate Flood-Prone Communities Act, to project communities that benefit from the Corps' work on non-structural projects, like structure elevation and flood-proofing.

These reforms will provide for voluntary buyouts, temporary relocation assistance for structure elevation projects, and a pilot program to expand the scope of eligible costs for certain structure elevation projects, including the Rhode Island coastline and Pawcatuck River projects.

While the phrase "cooperative federalism" is often mis-used these days, EPA's Clean and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds embody that concept. The SRFs have proven to be one of the most effective programs at generating a return on Federal investment. Agency estimates put every dollar spent through these programs

as producing a $3 investment directly into our communities. It is no wonder they receive such strong bipartisan support in Congress.

Much work remains to be done on replacing lead service lines and addressing emergency contaminants, such as PFAS. Our bill increases the authorizations for both the Clean and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds to help us continue with those efforts.

Our bill also creates a pilot program to put point-of-use filtration systems in homes, at the other end of the pipeline from the plant, to help further mitigate PFAS and lead exposure. I look forward to seeing the results of that pilot program and hope it provides a basis for expansion in future years.

Alongside the SRFs, our bill authorizes nearly $7 billion in EPA programs to address a number of pressing issues facing our Country. These programs will improve the digitization and the cybersecurity of our water utilities, provide targeted assistance to small and disadvantaged communities, and support environmental restoration efforts to combat pollution in our waterways.

Some of our Nation's greatest waterways will benefit from the geographic programs we reauthorized, including the Southeast New England program, which has long received appropriations, thanks to the work of my colleague, Senator Jack Reed.

Personally, I am glad to have secured reauthorizations for microplastic remediation grants from Save Our Seas 2.0, and would recognize Senator Merkley for his diligent efforts on microplastics. I thank Senator Sullivan for his lead on Save Our Seas 2.0. We have also enhanced the National Estuaries Program.

The bill also will authorize Corps assistance to address a number of longstanding water resources challenges in Rhode Island, including hydrilla infestations on our freshwater lakes, breachway erosion, fish passage on the Lower Blackstone River, pilings removal in the Providence River, and long-term comprehensive flood and coastal storm risk management solutions for the City of Providence and surrounding areas. Many members have similar lists of achievements that they have managed in this bill.

So there is a lot of good to be accomplished because of this bill. I look forward to supporting its passage through our committee today.

I also look to the appropriators on the committee, notably our Chair, and encourage them to see these substantial authorizations as a clear signal from this committee that Congress wants to see more funding for Army Corps and EPA water infrastructure programs and projects, not less.

Thank you very much, again, Madam Chair. It has been a

pleasure working with you on this effort.

[The prepared statement of Senator Whitehouse follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator Whitehouse. Thanks for your statement.

I would like to, before we move to more business, to recognize my staff director, Adam Tomlinson, and also Libby Callaway, Murphie Barrett, Maddie Blalock, Jack Cline, Andy Zach, and Jay Aya-ay. It is his birthday today. He is half my mother's age, so happy birthday, Jack.

[Laughter.]

Senator Capito. And then Dan, Kara, Mayely, Ed, from your great staff as well. So thank you for that.

I will now call up S. 4949, the Water Resources Development Act of 2026. Next, I will call up the Capito-Whitehouse Substitute Amendment No. 1, which consists of a manager's package of amendments that have been agreed upon by the Ranking Member and me.

The Substitute includes the following amendments: Alsobrooks 1, as modified; Husted 1; Merkley 1; Merkley 3, as modified; Merkley 4; Merkley 9, as modified; Ricketts 2 as modified; Sullivan 1; and Wicker 1.

[The text of the Substitute Amendment follows:]

Senator Capito. Is there a discussion on the Substitute Amendment? If not, I move that the committee adopt the Substitute Amendment. Is there a second?

Senator Whitehouse. Second.

Senator Capito. All those in favor, say aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Senator Capito. All opposed, no.

[No audible response.]

Senator Capito. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The ayes do have it; the Substitute Amendment is adopted.

We do have a quorum, so in the interest of time, I know Senator Curtis and probably others have comments that they want to make, but I would ask Senators who would like to offer additional amendments to hold off on speaking until after final passage, if that is suitable.

So, does any Senator wish to be recognized to offer an additional amendment?

Yes, Senator Blunt Rochester.

Senator Blunt Rochester. Thank you, Chairman Capito. I would like to offer and ultimately withdraw Amendment Blunt Rochester-Padilla 1.

[The text of the amendment follows:]

Senator Blunt Rochester. While I support this legislation wholeheartedly, I think there is an area where it falls short, and that is meeting our Country's growing affordability crisis. Americans are seeing higher costs everywhere, from the gas pump to housing. They shouldn't have to choose between their groceries and utility bills.

This is why Senator Padilla and I, with the support of utilities and community organizations, have been working on the Water Affordability Program, modeled after the highly successful LIHEAP program. Water affordability has been a mounting crisis for years, and it is only getting worse. From aging infrastructure to higher operational costs, water rates are skyrocketing, and Americans are struggling to pay their bills.

This water affordability program would provide much-needed relief to families and give our water utilities the reliable revenue stream they need for regular maintenance.

There is no question that clean, safe, reliable and affordable water is a basic right, and is essential to public health. Chairman Cpaito, I hope that you will continue to work with me and Senator Padilla on this very important effort, and I yield the remainder of my time to my colleague and partner in this very, very important work on behalf of the American people, Senator Padilla.

Senator Padilla. Thank you, Senator Blunt Rochester.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I will try to be brief.

Water affordability is a critical issue. It is not a Red State, Blue State thing. This is for working families across the Country. Some, as Senator Blunt Rochester said, some families across the Country are struggling to get by, to pay the bills, and afford basic goods. That includes water and wastewater utility bills. Lot of focus on gas and healthcare costs and housing, et cetera, but water and wastewater utility rates have been growing at twice the rate of inflation for 25 years.

And we know that there are programs that work, because we did it during the pandemic. We offered support for families that didn't just help them pay their water bills, it helped prevent water shutoffs, it helped folks who had been in arrears reinstate their services; 1.4 million households across 49 States were helped. But that program has come to an end. We are trying to reinstate it and improve upon it.

I also remind us all that when we don't help, everybody else pays the price. Because the past due bills that go unpaid are then covered by the rest of ratepayers in that utility or district's service area.

So the bill that we have proposed and offered as an amendment is inclusive of working with not just ratepayer advocates and local governments, but water utilities and others.

We crafted a bill that everybody agrees would be helpful.

So I understand that there wasn't time or capacity to move it in this particular bill, but Madam Chair, we do appeal to you to keep working with us in good faith to find a way forward for our water affordability proposal. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Thank you. I would like to thank both Senators Blunt Rochester and Padilla for offering the amendment and withdrawing it. I understand the concern. We all hear this from our constituents, the impact of water costs.

I would note that by passing this bill, I do believe with the modernization of systems, I can speak for my own State, an independent study it did that said 50 percent of the water doesn't even make it to the end because of the aging infrastructure. That adds to the cost as well.

So we will continue, I pledge to continue to work with you all on this bill. Thank you. Senator Whitehouse?

Senator Whitehouse. Yes, I would love to express support for Senator Blunt Rochester's and Senator Padilla's effort here. States like mine and Senator Blunt Rochester's are facing sea level rise and rain burst activity that causes both coastal and riverside flooding. In one of my municipalities, the town of Warren, they are having to relocate the entire wastewater cleaning plant because of its risk of being flooded.

Those expenditures, to meet the risk of sea level rise and

of the rain burst flooding, require investments by the water utilities and the clean water utilities that have to raise rates. And that is only going to get worse as the climate upheaval continues.

In western States, like Senator Padilla's and Senator Kelly's, they have the opposite problem, which is drought and evaporation destroying longstanding water supplies and creating very significant conflicts over water use. But obviously, with less water to go around, the costs then go up. So once again, we face the price problem at the consumer level.

In New England, LIHEAP is a vital resource, so I think that is a good model to work off of. I appreciate very much the efforts to Senator Blunt Rochester and Senator Padilla, and their supporters and co-sponsors in moving this forward. We will keep working with you.

Senator Capito. Does anybody else have additional amendments?

All right. I can now move the committee report of the bill, as amended, favorably. Is there a second?

Senator Whitehouse. Second.

Senator Capito. Thank you. The Clerk will call the roll.

The Clerk. Ms. Alsbrooks?

Senator Alsobrooks. Aye.

The Clerk. Ms. Blunt Rochester?

Senator Blunt Rochester. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Boozman?

Senator Boozman. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Cramer?

Senator Cramer. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Curtis?

Senator Curtis. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Husted?

Senator Husted. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Kelly?

Senator Kelly. Aye.

The Clerk. Ms. Lummis?

Senator Lummis. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Markey?

Senator Whitehouse. Aye, by proxy.

The Clerk. Mr. Merkley?

Senator Merkley. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Padilla?

Senator Padilla. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Ricketts?

Senator Ricketts. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Sanders?

Senator Whitehouse. Aye, by proxy.

The Clerk. Mr. Schiff?

Senator Whitehouse. Aye, by proxy.

The Clerk. Mr. Sullivan?

Senator Sullivan. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Whitehouse?

Senator Whitehouse. Aye.

The Clerk. Mr. Wicker?

Senator Wicker. Aye.

The Clerk. Madam Chairman?

Senator Capito. Aye.

The Clerk. Madam Chairman, the yeas are 18, and the nays are zero.

Senator Capito. Well, I would note, Senator Whitehouse, we have a unanimous result here. Thank all the members, staff and everyone. Very good.

[Applause.]

Senator Capito. This is no small feat.

With that, the legislation as amended is favorably reported. The roll call vote on Presidential Nominee No. 806-5, Kevin Lilly of Texas, to be Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, will be held at a later committee meeting.

So, now, I would like to recognize members who would like to speak. I know Senator Curtis, I will go to you first, since you mentioned to me first.

Senator Curtis. Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be very

brief. I just would like to echo some of the remarks made by you and the Ranking Member.

As the Ranking Member alluded to, Utah is in a record drought. Everywhere I go, it is water, water, water, water. And I think in many cases, as many pressing problems as we have as a Country and a State, water still rises to the top.

So I am very pleased, particularly for the communities of Ephraim and Centerville, who will benefit from this in their ability to bring clean water to their residents and otherwise would not be able to do it without this bill.

So I would like to thank the committee, the staff, the Ranking Member and yourself, for making this possible.

I would also like to point out the Great Salt Lake and the impending needs there. I look forward to further discussions with this committee and other members to see how we can save a very, very important asset in the west. It is an environmental issue, it is a standard of living issue. On many, many levels, this is important, and a very important role.

What I am pleased with, with the Great Salt Lake is, my State is not just waiting for the Federal Government. I have philanthropic help, I have local community help, I have State government help. Everybody is leaning into this, and I am grateful the Federal Government is willing to lean in as well.

With that, I yield. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Senator Merkley?

Senator Merkley. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to join in the reminiscence about our colleague, Senator Graham, and the flowers at his seat, symbolizing his passing.

On the Budget Committee, as he sat as Chair and I as Ranking Member, we had vociferously different viewpoints on some of the issues that have come through this chamber over the last year and a half. After we got through thoroughly advocating for our viewpoints, we would be laughing and joking about many other things.

It kind of emphasizes the point that my colleagues were making about the ability to argue over policy, but share a connection that this chamber needs so much more of. He will be very, very much missed.

Thank you, Madam Chair and Ranking Member, for the work. When you look at the details in this bill, it has so much, every State affected by dozens of factors. And a few of them that will be well-noticed in Oregon include the aquatic structures for the Lower Columbia River. When you dredge a river, which is, Portland, Oregon is the farthest inland deepwater port in the world, which means you have to do a lot of dredging to keep the ships coming up the river. The ships get bigger and bigger.

It also means you have to have a place to put those dredged

spoils. So that is very important. The change of the cost share in this bill is much appreciated.

We will continue to pursue that question right on through the conference.

The step channel in the Tillamook Bay enhancing navigation, the prioritization of the Cole Rivers Hatchery. So, this hatchery, it is where on the Rogue River, one of the wildest, incredible rivers in the world. But when it comes to the William Just Dam, that wild river ends. And you can see where the fish swim into concrete pools and they can find no other passage up the river.

When that dam was built, there was a commitment to this Nation to the hatchery process. Because we are talking about fall chinook, spring chinook, coho salmon, spring and summer, or summer and winter steelhead. And they don't do it just for the Rogue River, they produce it for other rivers as well.

So the clean water for this hatchery, because that has become an issue, and the power and the filtration system are just all essential, not just for the runs on the Rogue, but others as well.

So I appreciate bipartisan support for this commitment that was made when these dams were built, to keep all the hatcheries operating. But this one plays an incredible role.

The challenge of algae at Ross Island, the Columbia River

Basin Geographic Program, which helps reduce toxins in the basin, and as mentioned by my colleague, the work and study to identify, capture and remove micro and nano plastics, figuring out how we can manage that health threat.

We get more and more studies now about how those plastics are entering our bodies. First, it was a litter and trash problem, and then it was an aquatic ecosystem problem, and you would see pictures of the various fish and marine mammals with their stomachs full of plastic. Now it is a human health problem as well. So, much to be done in that area.

The list goes on and on, actually, factors. So I will stop with -- well, I will almost stop with that. There was one other -- well, no, that is plenty.

[Laughter.]

Senator Merkley. Thank you. Thank you for this diligent work.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Sullivan?

Senator Sullivan. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank you, actually my good friends Senator Capito, Chairman Capito and Senator Whitehouse, on your leadership. It is not surprising but it is not always typical, you get a unanimous outcome on a bill of this size and importance. So I want to thank both of you for your leadership.

We are kind of, not kind of, we are still very much in mourning. These flowers are representing my good friend, all of our good friend, Senator Lindsey Graham, who we are still in shock and tremendous heartache over the loss of him. I think it is appropriate, as we get this bill over the goal line in a huge bipartisan way, that we have a reminder of our good friend, Senator Graham, with these beautiful flowers.

I want to thank the committee staff, my team, who has worked really hard on this. This committee hears it a lot: my State has a lot of unique challenges. We are resource-rich but infrastructure-poor. Alaska has less road miles than Connecticut, and we are almost 120 times bigger than Connecticut.

So with vast distances and limited roads, the WRDA bill, the Highway bill are absolutely critical to my State and I appreciated the bipartisan support for many of the big initiatives that we were able to deliver for the great State of Alaska.

Certainly, building infrastructure is an important way, a critical way in my State, to bring down the coast of living when you have over 230 communities in Alaska that are not connected by roads. Most States can't even comprehend that. There are no communities that are not connected by roads in the lower 48. And we have over 230.

So costs are very high, and infrastructure is a critical way to keep down the cost. So I want to thank everybody. We are cutting right through the red tape to fast track a permanent engineering solution for Juneau, Alaska, which is currently preparing for yet another devastating glacial lake outburst flood.

We are keeping our foot on the gas in this bill to build America's very first Arctic deepwater port in Nome. And we are focusing the Corps' attention on building resilience along western Alaska's coast, which has faced increasingly severe storms and erosion over the last several years.

We are also making the Alaska District for the Corps of Engineers to have the permitting resource it actually needs to handle our unique challenges in ensuring our local harbors aren't penalized by unfair cost benefit metrics that ignore massive economic advantages to our communities, even when they have small populations.

But this bill doesn't stop there. We are reauthorizing critical EPA water and sewer funding, including $240 million through 2030 for the Alaska Native Village Sanitation Program. This is one step closer to achieving the goal that we all have in Alaska, which is putting the honey bucket in the museum and making it a relic of the past.

I have over 30 communities in my State, some of the most

patriotic communities in America, because Alaska Natives serve at higher rates in the military than any other ethnic group in the Country, over 30 communities that don't have water and sewer and flush toilets. Imagine that, the richest country in the world and people use honey buckets to take out their sewage. That is just unacceptable in America, and we are trying to get that done.

I really appreciate the focus of this committee to doing that, and that is a big, big, big advancement and it is exciting and needed in my State.

Finally, Senator Whitehouse is here, we are keeping up the momentum on our Save Our Seas 2.0, the most comprehensive ocean debris cleanup legislation ever passed in the history of the Country, signed into law a couple of years ago, and we are continuing that critical effort.

So again, I want to thank the leadership on this committee, all my colleagues. This is an important day for everybody. Every State has big wins in this bill and I am very excited about the wins for Alaska.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Alsobrooks?

Senator Alsobrooks. Thank you.

I want to thank Chair Capito and Ranking Member Whitehouse

and their staffs for leading the bipartisan process to develop this important piece of legislation. I was really proud to join them as Ranking Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee, along with Chair Cramer.

Water infrastructure has long been an area where Congress can find common ground and solve real problems for communities. This committee's track record to that effect is one of the reasons that I wanted to join.

Every family, every business, every school and every community depends on safe, abundant, reliable water and on the partnerships that cross municipal lines and unite rural and urban communities to manage flood risk and harness the economic opportunities afforded to us by our waterways.

In Maryland, whether you are from the Eastern Shore or Mountain Maryland, Baltimore or the suburbs, we are all connected by the same rivers, the same streams, and the Chesapeake Bay. This legislation builds on the historic investments Congress made through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law by reauthorizing and strengthening our Nation's core drinking water and wastewater programs. It ensures States and local communities continue to have the tools they need to modernize aging infrastructure, improve resilience and protect public health.

I am especially proud our bill includes provisions that

deliver real results for Maryland. From moving the Cumberland Flood Risk Management Project one step closer to completion, to addressing Assateague Island and authorizing a funding increase for the Chesapeake Bay Oyster Recovery Program, we are working together to modernize our infrastructure, protect our environment, strengthen our economy and ensure that communities across the Country and in Maryland are safe.

So I look forward to advancing this legislation and continuing to work with my colleagues to get it signed into law.

Thank you.

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator Alsobrooks, for all of your help in getting this as far as we are today.

Senator Husted?

Senator Husted. Thank you, Chair Capito, and to the Ranking Member, and the members of the committee. I very much appreciate the inclusion of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in this legislation.

I want to say thanks to my partner in this, Senator Gary Peters from Michigan.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is an example of success. Since its inception, we have seen the Great Lakes improve in terms of their water quality, address emerging threats. So many people, I know I am the only member of the committee that represents a Great Lakes State, so many people

rely on their water from the Great Lakes.

I know in Ohio, we have had initiatives like H2Ohio, which was designed to improve the relationship between the lake and the agricultural community by creating more buffer zones, like through wetlands and other things that have improved water quality.

But the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is an essential part of protecting the largest source of fresh water in the western hemisphere. And we are grateful, I am grateful to the committee members for supporting this. It is very important to my State and to the entire Country.

Thank you

Senator Capito. Thank you very much. I know how important the Great Lakes are. I appreciate your initiatives there.

Senator Padilla?

Senator Padilla. Thank you, Madam Chair.

First, let me join the chorus in thanking you and Senator Whitehouse and your staffs for all the work that it has taken to get this bill to a successful point and agreement. I appreciate your words earlier on the water affordability concern that several of us on the committee have shared.

I just wanted to take an opportunity to highlight one other issue of importance. It is continuing the critical flood protection work for the cities of Temecula and Murrieta, who

have experienced devastating floods with loss of life. Just last week, the Army Corps of Engineers completed a general reevaluation study that provides, finally, a certified cost estimate for the project.

So as WRDA moves forward, I would ask that the committee use the Corps' completed study to increase the project's cost ceiling, which is so critical for the flood protection work and for it to be able to continue.

I also want to highlight the problem of delays in approving loan applications under WIFIA. In my State, multiple applicants, including the City of Hayward and Valley Water, have been literally waiting for a year or even longer for OMB and the EPA to approve their fully completed loan applications, to approve them.

These are important projects that should be reviewed in a timely manner. As you know, time is money. But also, the longer we wait, the more we risk further damage and devastation.

Increasing transparency for the administrative reviews is always helpful as well. I appreciate that today's bill includes a provision tracking the average amount of time it takes to process these loans, not just for the benefit of these projects in my State, but for everybody.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. All right. I want to thank all the

members for being here. Thanks for the success, thanks to Senator Whitehouse and all of you for being here.

With that, this business meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:39 a.m., the business meeting was adjourned.]