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What you say about the issues matters – so say it in the local paper too

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If you're a regular reader of *Actionline*, you know how highly we value your direct communication with Congress. Notes and calls to representatives and senators from industry execs are critical to advancing ACPPA's legislative agenda. Your opinion carries extra weight on Capitol Hill because you're a business leader, a job creator, and someone with unique insights about what's happening in the local economy. For all those reasons, your opinion also matters to local newspapers, which are often overlooked as a vehicle to influence what's happening in Washington, D.C.

Any congressional press secretary worth his or her salt spends time each day monitoring the media "back home". Congressional staffers scour publications for any mention of their boss's name or discussion of federal issues. Even if lawmakers don't read every local newspaper themselves, you can be sure they get clippings and media briefings. That means a letter to the editor published in a hometown newspaper can serve the same purpose as a letter to a congressional office, with the added benefit that you're simultaneously influencing voters and other elected officials.

Your letter is most likely to get published if it responds – even tangentially – to a story the paper has recently run. For example, a range of different articles could serve as a launching pad for a letter about the highway bill. You could relate a piece about local traffic congestion to the need to increase investment and expand road capacity. A story about economic conditions is an excuse to talk about restoring certainty to federal infrastructure programs to help put the construction industry back to work. Your response to an article about the presidential race could point out that the nation is facing a crisis due to crumbling water infrastructure that threatens our access to clean drinking water and that candidates should be spending more time talking about their plans to secure our future.

Here are some other tips to getting your letter published:

- In the first sentence of your letter, make specific reference to the article to which you're responding.
- Be timely; don't wait more than a day or two to respond to a story.
- Keep your letter brief (200 words or fewer).
- Make one major point rather than trying to include every argument that supports your position.

- Reinforce your credentials by providing brief biographical information at the end of the letter (e.g., “The author is president & CEO of XYZ Co., a manufacturing company with 40 employees and three locations across the state.”)
- Take a look at other letters the paper has published and mirror their style as much as possible.
- Check and follow the newspaper’s submission guidelines (usually posted on the publication’s website).

Also, be sure to keep ACPPA in mind as a resource. ACPPA.org/advocacy has plenty of useful information and policy data points. ACPPA-Action.org (ACPPA’s grassroots action site) includes a zip code search tool to help you identify and communicate with all the publications that serve your area. And, just as ACPPA’s Government Affairs team is always on standby to help members prepare communications to Congress, we’re equally willing to help you prepare letters to local papers.

Even if your letter doesn’t get published, don’t be discouraged. You can be sure it was read by someone. That means it may influence future editorials and reporting. Also, by submitting a letter, you’ve raised your profile and identified yourself as someone with expertise about the topic. Next time they’re preparing a related story the reporter may contact you for your input or for quotes.

In addition to sending letters to the editor, you can also engage reporters directly. Keep track of who’s writing locally about Congress and the economy. Send those reporters brief notes with additional insights or suggesting a new angle for a story. (Their email addresses are generally available online.) Help them put national issues in a local perspective. Offer yourself as a resource on topics like infrastructure, taxes, the housing market, etc. It takes time to build relationships and trust with reporters, but just as with your customer relationships, the long-term payoff can be big.

Direct communication with lawmakers matters; indirect communication can have a big impact too. Keep the letters coming!

ACPPA Outlines Legislative Agenda for 2012

From crumbling bridges to water main breaks, reminders of America’s rapidly deteriorating infrastructure are in the news every day. ACPPA’s 2012 legislative priorities will put the association back on Capitol Hill working both sides of the aisle to remind lawmakers about the critical need for robust and sustained infrastructure investments.

ACPPA’s top priority is securing federal commitments for the improvement and maintenance of our nation’s drinking water and wastewater networks. ACPPA will work to ensure adequate investments in the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) and vigorously fight to protect these programs from any further cuts. Just last month, the American Society of Civil Engineers released their [2009 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure](#), which found that by 2020, the costs of poor water delivery and wastewater treatment may lead to an additional \$206 billion in out-of-pocket expenses for American businesses and households. As this report shows, a modest investment now will yield significant long-term savings.

With the tough federal budget environment, ACPPA will also work with Congress to facilitate private investments in water infrastructure. A top legislative goal is pushing for the enactment of the Sustainable Water Infrastructure Investment Act ([S. 939/H.R. 1802](#)). This important legislation will help close the shortfall in federal water investments by lifting the volume cap on private activity bonds for water infrastructure projects. Estimates are that the Sustainable Water Infrastructure Investment Act can generate \$5 billion of private investment in water projects annually.

In addition to water infrastructure, ACPPA will continue to encourage the approval of a long-term blueprint for the federal highway program to restore certainty to the hard-hit construction industry.

The association will also promote tax policies encouraging growth and recovery for the construction sector. Congress can immediately encourage capital equipment investment by extending 100 percent depreciation bonus. These capital investment incentives, which enjoy bipartisan support, have incentivized business purchasing and job creation since their implementation, and must be extended.

Lawmakers should also extend the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts. Tax fluctuations from year to year complicate long-term planning and investing for businesses. A two year extension of the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts would afford lawmakers the time to consider comprehensive tax reform, a serious debate that must take place in Washington in the near future.

While ACPPA understands that there is a role for government agencies like the National Labor Relations Board, Occupational Safety & Health Administration, Department of Labor, and Environmental Protection Agency, regulations should only provide oversight, not overreach. Therefore, the rollback of restrictive regulatory policies that impede economic recovery will also remain a priority for ACPPA.

Late in 2011, the association worked to secure House passage of several bills that would reduce the industry's regulatory burden and improve the rulemaking environment businesses face. ACPPA will continue to press senators to act on the Coal Residuals Reuse & Management Act ([H.R. 2273/S. 1751](#)), the Cement Sector Regulatory Relief Act of 2011 ([H.R. 2681](#)), the Regulatory Flexibility Improvements Act ([H.R. 527](#)), the Regulatory Accountability Act ([H.R. 3010](#)), and the Regulations from the Executive in Needs of Scrutiny (REINS) Act ([H.R. 10/S. 299](#)).

ACPPA will also focus on expanding energy production. The United States must invest in developing domestic energy resources to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and create jobs. Lawmakers must do everything in their power to ensure approval of the Keystone XL pipeline. The Keystone project will generate considerable economic activity and create as many as 20,000 new jobs (at least 13,000 of those in the construction sector).

To view the 2012 ACPPA legislative priorities brochure and to weigh-in with your lawmakers on these and other legislative priorities, please visit ACPPA-Action.org.

Two, Five, Six – What Will a Multiyear Highway Bill Look Like?

Momentum for a multiyear surface transportation bill continues to build in Washington, with the House, Senate, and White House all putting proposals forward. Though all the key players are involved and committed to making a long-term bill a reality, there remain deep divisions over how to get there.

The challenge for transportation advocates over the coming months will be working among the various players to forge a bipartisan compromise.

House Leaders Call for At Least a Five-Year Bill

With an agreement announced by congressional leaders on a final FAA reauthorization bill, the House is poised to move forward on multiyear highway legislation in February.

House Republicans are unveiling a surface transportation bill on Jan. 31. After introducing the legislation, the House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee will promptly move forward with consideration of the bill, marking it up on Feb. 2 and then send it to the House floor for final approval. House Republican leadership has indicated their desire to have the highway bill through the House by Feb. 20.

Details of the House bill are fuzzy. The legislation will likely be five years in duration and provide about \$52 billion annually (\$259.4 billion over the programs lifetime). However, T&I Chairman John Mica (R-FL) has said that he would like the legislation to be extended to six or seven years if the financing is available. The proposal will be financed in part by expanded offshore drilling royalties. As ACPPA has [previously noted](#), this will complicate agreement on a final bill.

In addition to the T&I Committee, in the House, the Energy & Commerce and Natural Resources Committees will have to act on the energy components of the legislation. The Ways & Means Committee must also approve the financing portion of the bill.

Senators Pushing Two-Year Bill

In the Senate, the leaders of the Environment & Public Works Committee are still pushing a two-year, bipartisan, \$109 billion deal ([S. 1813](#)) that would keep highway investments on par with current commitments.

However, to meet this goal, senators must come up with at least \$12 billion in additional funding to cover the shortfall between current revenue and spending levels, a substantial challenge in the budget environment. Senate Finance Committee members are looking for ways to find the necessary revenue. Recent [rumblings](#) have indicated that the committee may have identified sources to secure up to \$17 billion for transportation, but nothing has been officially unveiled. In addition to the Finance Committee, the Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs Committee must still consider the transit title of the legislation before the bill can be brought to the Senate floor.

White House Wants Six Year Program

In his 2012 [State of the Union](#) address, President Obama again called on Congress to approve investments to fix America's crumbling roads and bridges, and to put the hard-hit construction industry back to work. The administration has called for a six-year, \$556 billion surface transportation package.

Obama has been urging to Congress to act on transportation investments since 2010, though the administration's proposals have not matched with political reality and have been rejected by lawmakers at the opposite end of Pennsylvania Ave. In the State of the Union, the president suggested paying for infrastructure using money saved from troop drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Like Obama's past funding proposals, this measure will face significant opposition on Capitol Hill.

ACPPA Stresses Importance of Multiyear Highway Bill

ACPPA remains in the midst of the political wrangling over the highway bill, stressing the employment, economic, and environmental benefits that a new long-term surface transportation bill will bring.

With the current highway authorization set to expire on Mar. 31, it is important that Congress act now. Be sure to stay tuned to *Actionline* for the latest developments. In the meantime, weigh-in with your lawmakers to urge their support for highway reauthorization legislation by visiting www.ACPPA-Action.org

Obama's Recess Appoints Ensure NLRB Labor Tilt

President Obama ushered in the New Year by circumventing the Senate approval process and unilaterally making three recess appointments to National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

The move ensures that the NLRB maintains the number of members necessary for continued operation. Without the appointments, the Board would have been reduced to two members, denying it a quorum and rendering it inoperable.

Unfortunately, two of the president's nominees are labor attorneys with a pro-union background, including Department of Labor Deputy Assistant for Congressional Affairs, Sharon Block, and International Union of Operating Engineers General Counsel, Richard Griffin. While the nomination of Block and Griffin will keep the Board tilted in favor of unions, Obama also nominated Terrence Flynn, chief counsel to current Republican board member Brian Hayes.

It is clear that the administration wishes to make the Board an even more union-friendly body. Given the NLRB's [recent activities](#), including its role in the Boeing case and the [proposed](#) "ambush election" rules, the addition of two more union advocates will only make the Board more anti-employer.

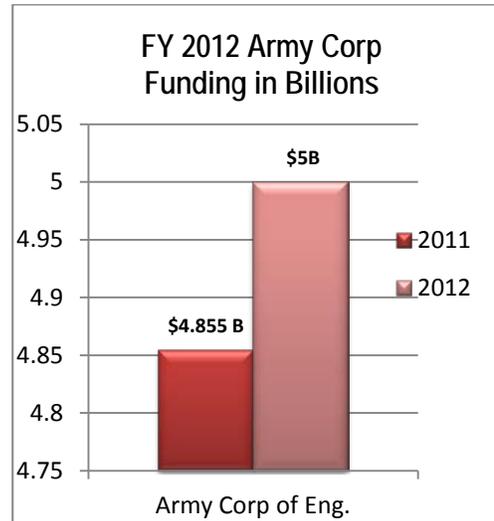
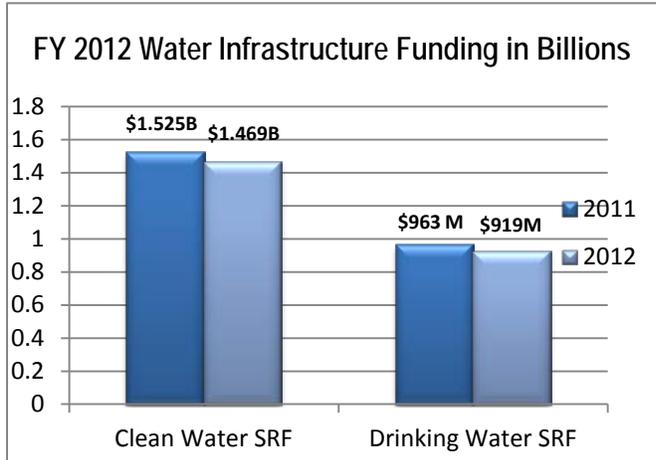
Water Funding Cut in FY 2012

In the closing days of the first session of the 112th Congress, appropriators slashed investment levels for water and highway infrastructure projects. These cuts will further impede a drastically underfunded and outdated infrastructure system.

The Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds both took hits in the Omnibus Appropriations Bill ([H.R. 2055](#)). The bill directed several reductions at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), cutting \$101 million from the State Revolving Fund (SRF) budgets.

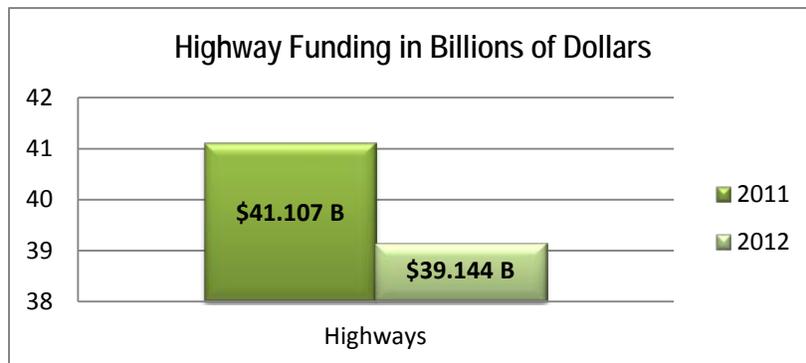
The Clean Water SRF, used by states for water quality protection and wastewater infrastructure projects, was allotted \$1.469 billion in 2012, a cut of more than \$50 million. The Drinking Water SRF, which

provides states the resources for potable water infrastructure projects, will receive \$919 million in 2012—\$44 million less than in 2011.



However, the budget for the Army Corps of Engineers was the one bright spot among infrastructure investments, receiving a slight uptick in 2012 funding levels. The Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2012 ([H.R. 3672](#)) and the “Omnibus” 2012 Appropriations bill ([H.R. 2055](#) & [H.R. 3671](#)) provided \$5 billion to the Corps, which oversees large civil and water projects—a \$145 million increase from 2011 investments.

The federal highway program also saw a drop in investment levels for 2012. The “Minibus” appropriations bill ([H.R. 2112](#)), signed into law in November 2011 designated \$39.144 billion to federal highway programs through the Highway Trust Fund.



Throughout 2012, ACPPA will continue to reach out to lawmakers and educate them about the urgent need for robust and sustained infrastructure investments. Stay tuned to *Actionline* for details on the associations efforts to secure investments for these important federal programs.

Administration Disappoints, Rejects Keystone Pipeline

Despite a [push](#) from a host of leading business organization and a coalition of national construction associations and unions, including ACPPA, President Obama [denied approval for the Keystone XL pipeline](#) on Jan. 18.

Caught between appeasing his labor and environmental supporters, the president's move is the latest of many disappointing bouts of political posturing over the pipeline, including a [November decision](#) to delay a decision until after the 2012 presidential election. Most notable among the collateral damage is the opportunity to approve an important infrastructure project that could have created [13,000 jobs](#) and brought 830,000 barrels of oil per day to U.S. refineries.

The president justified his decision saying a provision in December's temporary payroll tax cut created a "rushed and arbitrary deadline," which "prevented a full assessment of the pipeline's impact, especially the health and safety of the American people, as well as our environment."

Obama's statement, however, seems contrary to the findings in the State Department's [Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\)](#) completed in Aug. 2011. In its final EIS, the department concluded that the pipeline would not have a detrimental effect on the ecology of areas surrounding the proposed construction.

Obama's action did not close the door completely on the Keystone project. TransCanada said recently that it plans to reapply for a permit to build the pipeline.

Congressional supporters of the Keystone Pipeline XL are exploring options for forcing the matter by attaching it to either the payroll tax holiday bill or the surface transportation legislation. Proposals to compel the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to make a decision on the pipeline or simply giving Congress the authority to approve the project are being considered on the Hill. The risk inherent in attaching Keystone language to either the payroll tax or surface transportation bills, however, is that the pipeline provision might jeopardize bipartisan support for the overriding measure.

While lawmakers search for ways to get the pipeline built, they are asking for examples of businesses outside the oil industry that have been negatively impacted by the delay. To tell your story of lost opportunity, please send an email to ACPPA's lobbyist on Capitol Hill, [Daniel Fisher](#).

ACPPA will continue pressing for the permission of the Keystone XL pipeline in order to create jobs and pursue greater energy security.

A New Year, A New Look: ACPPA Unveils New Website

ACPPA ushered in the New Year with a newly designed website. [ACPPA.org](#) has undergone a significant face lift, making the site cleaner to navigate.

The site has a fresh look and smoother user interface, making it easier for ACPPA member to find the information you need and stay in contact with the association. While you're checking out the redesign, be

sure to check us out on [Twitter](#) too. [@acppaHQ](#) is your association's official Twitter feed and you can follow us for important news and updates.