

KEY VOTE ALERT!

March 6, 2014



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Congressional & Public Affairs
1615 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20062
202-463-5600

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

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 H.R. 2641, the "Responsibly And Professionally Invigorating Development (RAPID) Act of 2013," which would provide a streamlined process for developers, builders, and designers 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.

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 (*Project No Project*) had a total economic value of over \$1 trillion and represented 1.9 American jobs not created. *Project No Project* showed that in the energy sector alone, one year of delay translates into millions of jobs not created.

The Responsibly And Professionally Invigorating Development Act of 2013 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;
- Consolidating the process into a single Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and single Environmental Assessment (EA) for a project, except as otherwise provided by law;
- Imposing reasonable fixed deadlines for completion of an EIS or EA; and
- Reducing the statute of limitations to challenge a final EIS or EA from six years to 180 days.

The RAPID Act 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 RAPID Act also embodies the procedural improvements to “cut red tape” as called for by the Obama administration, including, most recently, in his January 28, 2014, State of the Union Address.

The RAPID Act addresses the problem far too many shovel-ready 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.

H.R. 2641, the RAPID Act, would be the strong action needed to speed up the permitting process and let important projects move forward, allowing millions of workers to get back to work. **The Chamber strongly supports H.R. 2641 and may consider votes on, or in relation to, H.R. 2641 in our annual *How They Voted* scorecard.**

Sincerely,

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

R. Bruce Josten