



RESILIENT Act Section by Section

Section 1: Title and Table of Contents

Section 2: Findings

This section outlines the significant rural infrastructure investment needs, as well as the unique challenges that rural communities face in maintaining and improving their infrastructure.

Section 3: Definitions

This section defines “infrastructure” to be broadly inclusive of transportation, water and wastewater, energy, buildings, housing, schools, and broadband. It defines “rural” as any community with fewer than 20,000 people that is located outside a census-defined urbanized area. This definition applies only to the new programs established in this bill and does not preempt existing programs, or funding opportunities that define “rural” using different metrics.

Title 1: Department of Agriculture

Section 101: Rural Partnerships Office

This section establishes a Rural Partnerships Office at the USDA, headed by a Director appointed by the President.

Section 102: Rural Infrastructure Partnerships

This section, through the Rural Partnerships Office, establishes:

- A Rural Partners Program to assist with rural infrastructure delivery, financing, operation, and maintenance through dedicated on-site technical assistance teams that include providers from multiple specialties (water, transportation, etc.).
- An online clearinghouse for best practices on rural infrastructure planning, management, funding, and financing.
- A pre-development/project scoping grant program, with a simple application, to assist communities developing cost-effective infrastructure projects that take advantage of the other provisions in this bill, such as regionally coordinated or bundled approaches.
- A Rural Infrastructure Bundling Program. Upon selection in the Bundling program, eligible applicants (local, regional, and state entities) would receive

funding to offset the costs of developing projects that bundle multiple infrastructure needs to increase the scale of infrastructure development in rural areas (e.g., 100 bridges; 50 water systems). Participants would receive assistance with project procurement and management, including priority access to federal funding and financing, and assistance identifying private financing opportunities. The streamlined program application process would be tailored for rural areas, only requiring a letter of interest and project concept, any identified sources of funding, and a demonstration of need.

Section 103: Rural Economic and Community Development

This section clarifies that passenger transportation facilities are eligible for USDA Community Facilities Development Grants and prioritizes funding for transportation projects that co-locate social service facilities or employment centers with passenger transportation.

Section 104: Simplification of Application Process

This section requires the USDA to solicit public comment on how to streamline the application process for USDA programs that provide loans, grants, or other financing for rural infrastructure projects. It also requires that they evaluate and consider application requirements of other agencies, such as the Economic Development Administration. Finally, it requires that USDA report back to Congress on how it intends to implement the feedback to improve USDA's rural infrastructure application process.

Title 2: Interagency Coordination

Section 201: Rural Liaisons

This section establishes Rural Liaisons at each federal agency with a rural infrastructure nexus to improve coordination across the federal government. The Liaison would serve as an advocate for rural communities and help resolve problems that may arise with the agency. The Liaisons would also be required to identify and streamline burdensome regulations within their respective agency that disproportionately affect rural communities, and coordinate funding strategies across agencies to maximize the efficiency and value of federal investment.

Section 202: Interagency Task Force

This section requires the Secretary of Commerce to establish an Interagency Task Force to examine how to coordinate rural infrastructure programs and requirements across the government to maximize efficiency, leverage resources, and reduce up-front costs to rural communities. The Task Force may consider how to pre-screen applicants, identify projects that are likely to attract federal resources, and steer applicants in the right direction for public or private financing and funding opportunities. The task force will

include state and local rural development professionals from across the country, and will provide an opportunity for input from the public and from agency field representatives.

Title 3: Other Departments and Agencies

Section 301: Flexibility for Rural Infrastructure Financing

This section amends existing transportation and water infrastructure federal financing programs (TIFIA for surface transportation and WIFIA for water infrastructure) to provide more favorable terms and conditions for rural communities. This section:

- Allows for TIFIA and WIFIA to cover a greater percentage of eligible costs (up to 67% of project costs, compared to 49% currently) for rural projects.
- Provides an extended payment period (up to 40 years from date of substantial completion) for rural projects.
- Allows the Agency to waive application fees for “small community projects” (25,000 people or less) and projects in rural areas.

Finally, this section directs the EPA and USDA to develop an outreach campaign to promote water financing options in rural areas, and develop a strategy to ensure USDA Rural Development funding and WIFIA financing complement one another in rural communities.

Section 302: Drinking water and wastewater infrastructure

This section modifies and improves existing EPA water infrastructure authorities. The bill would:

- Provide greater flexibility for Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRF) by allowing rural water projects to be built with future growth in mind and with longer repayment terms. It also prioritizes SRF applications where water systems partner at a regional scale, or use innovative management, procurement, or ownership arrangements. Finally, this section allows for SRF to be used for technical assistance to support regional coordinators in rural areas and disadvantaged communities.
- Establish the System Partnership Program to provide communities who are in significant noncompliance with financial assistance to pursue partnerships that bring the system into compliance, with a grace period for communities who are pursuing such a regional approach to achieve compliance.
- Require studies that address rural water infrastructure barriers, including a study of system regionalization, a study evaluating the use of cooperative or joint procurement models in rural areas, and a report to evaluate how “cross-cutting” federal requirements affect costs. Each study will provide recommendations to reduce costs and maximize infrastructure development in rural areas.

- Reauthorize funding for environmental finance centers who assist small rural water systems with fiscal sustainability.

Section 303: Solicitation of Public Comment on Water Audits

Requires the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other members of the Interagency Physical Inspection Alignment Initiative, to solicit public comment on the costs and benefits of conducting water audits in tandem with multifamily housing inspections by the Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC).

Title 4: Administration

Section 401: Effect of definition: Nothing in the definition of the term “rural” in Section 3 affects any provision of law defining eligibility for any other program for rural infrastructure projects in existence as of the date of enactment of this Act.

Section 402: Authorization of appropriations.