

July 22, 2024

The Honorable Gary Peters
Chairman
Senate Homeland Security & Government Affairs
Committee
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6250

The Honorable Dr. Rand Paul
Ranking Member
Senate Homeland Security & Government Affairs
Committee
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6250

Re: Support for H.R. 7525, the *Special District Grant Eligibility Act*

Dear Chairman Peters and Ranking Member Paul:

We, the undersigned alliance of supporting special district stakeholder organizations, express strong support for H.R. 7525, the *Special District Grant Eligibility Act*, to define “special district” in federal law. This monumental bill would break down barriers we face to access federally-sourced funding for local governments’ critical infrastructure and essential services, and drive federal understanding of our sector of local government across the nation.

This legislation is pending before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs and is on the agenda for its Business Meeting scheduled for July 24, 2024. It is identical to S. 4673, sponsored by Senator Kyrsten Sinema and co-led by Senator John Cornyn.

More than 35,000 special districts altogether provide critical infrastructure and essential community services including, but not limited to: fire protection, drinking water, wastewater treatment, libraries, flood control and drainage, levee, irrigation, electricity, parks and recreation, resource conservation, healthcare, ambulance, mosquito abatement, transit, road/highway, seaport and riverport, aviation, and public cemetery. These special districts are all autonomous, provide local government services in all 50 states.

Despite their prevalence and significance, “special district” is not formally defined in federal statute. Further, the federal government does not consider special districts to be a standard unit of government eligible to update or certify population and household statistics. Together, these issues create significantly higher barriers to access direct- or pass-through federal programs intended to supplement local governments’ critical infrastructure and other essential services.

H.R. 7525 is a simple, straight-forward solution to a complex issue we face as a local special district government to access federally-sourced funding on a more level playing field with our fellow units of local government.

Simply and specifically, this bill would define “special district” and require the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to issue guidance within six months to federal agencies that clarifies and reinforces that special districts are local governments. The guidance would be implemented across federal agencies over the course of a year with a report to Congress on the policy within two years of enactment.

For these reasons, we respectfully request and urge your and the Committee’s support and yes vote on the *Special District Grant Accessibility Act*.

Please consider us a resource for you and your staff on this important issue, and we are happy answer any questions or concerns you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact Cole Arreola Karr at cole@karradvocacy.com.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

American Mosquito Control Association
Government Finance Officers Association
International Association of Fire Chiefs
National Association of Emergency and Fire Officials
National Recreation and Park Association

State, Regional & Local Organizations

Arizona Fire Districts Association
Arizona Special Districts Alliance
Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts
Rural Water Association of Arizona
Tennessee Association of Utility Districts
Washington Association of Sewer and Water Districts
Washington Public Utility Districts Association

Special Districts & Local Government Partners

Arizona: Coconino County
California: Calleguas Municipal Water District
California: Kern County Special Districts Association
Montana: Tri-Lakes Volunteer Fire Service Area
Ohio: Great Parks of Hamilton County
Texas: Northeast Texas Municipal Water District
Texas: Trinity River Authority of Texas

Business Partners

GovFin