

116TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To provide for the improvement of rural infrastructure in the United States,  
and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Mr. BENNET introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred  
to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To provide for the improvement of rural infrastructure in  
the United States, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the  
5 “Reforming, Expanding, and Simplifying Investment for  
6 Local Infrastructure to Enhance our Neighborhoods and  
7 Towns Act” or the “RESILIENT Act”.

8 (b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for  
9 this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Findings.
- Sec. 3. Definitions.

## 2

## TITLE I—DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

- Sec. 101. Rural Partnerships Office.
- Sec. 102. Rural infrastructure partnerships.
- Sec. 103. Rural economic and community development.
- Sec. 104. Simplification of application process.

## TITLE II—INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

- Sec. 201. Rural Liaisons.
- Sec. 202. Interagency rural infrastructure task force.

## TITLE III—OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

- Sec. 301. Rural infrastructure financing flexibility.
- Sec. 302. Drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Sec. 303. Solicitation of public comment on conducting water audits with REAC inspections.

## TITLE IV—ADMINISTRATION

- Sec. 401. Effect of definition.
- Sec. 402. Authorization of appropriations.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds that—

3 (1) rural infrastructure, such as roads, water  
4 systems, and broadband, is in dire need of upgrade  
5 and repair;

6 (2) rural areas face unique challenges when ad-  
7 dressing infrastructure;

8 (3) rural communities often lack staff with the  
9 necessary expertise to develop major infrastructure  
10 projects or to secure financing;

11 (4) many rural projects struggle to attract re-  
12 gional support or private sector investment;

13 (5) revenue sources, such as taxes or user fees,  
14 are limited in many rural areas;

1           (6) 13 percent of major rural roads are in poor  
2           condition, and more than 50 percent of rural bridges  
3           are considered to not be in good condition;

4           (7) only 60 percent of counties nationwide have  
5           public transportation service, and over  $\frac{1}{4}$  of those  
6           counties have very limited public transportation serv-  
7           ice;

8           (8) many rural transit vehicles are still on the  
9           road despite being past their useful life, which can  
10          lead to costly repairs, unreliable service, and safety  
11          issues;

12          (9) every day, nearly 6,000,000,000 gallons of  
13          treated drinking water are lost, an amount that  
14          could support 15,000,000 households;

15          (10) without a full investment in water, by  
16          2040, the cumulative impact from breakdowns in  
17          water supply, treatment, and wastewater capacity is  
18          estimated to cost manufacturers and other busi-  
19          nesses \$7,500,000,000,000 in lost sales and  
20          \$4,100,000,000,000 in lost gross domestic product;

21          (11) Federal agencies estimate that the cost of  
22          drinking water and wastewater infrastructure  
23          projects in rural communities will total almost  
24          \$190,000,000,000 in the coming decades;

1           (12) small water systems reaching fewer than  
2           3,300 people serve only 8 percent of the population  
3           of the United States, but account for nearly 83 per-  
4           cent of reported funding needs;

5           (13) Federal funding of water infrastructure  
6           was 63 percent of total capital spending in 1977,  
7           and was down to 9 percent in 2014;

8           (14) nearly 1 in 3 rural residents lack access to  
9           basic broadband;

10          (15) every dollar spent on infrastructure gen-  
11          erates up to \$2.50;

12          (16) Federal, State, and local governments  
13          combined spent \$440,500,000,000 on infrastructure  
14          in 2017, with less than 25 percent of that amount  
15          provided by the Federal Government;

16          (17) fewer multidisciplinary Federal agency  
17          field staff has reduced the capacity of rural commu-  
18          nities to navigate complex infrastructure projects;

19          (18) lack of adequate infrastructure adversely  
20          impacts the efforts of rural communities to create  
21          jobs, stimulate economic growth, and diversify their  
22          economies; and

23          (19) it is therefore in the national economic in-  
24          terest to assist rural communities in addressing their  
25          infrastructure needs.

1 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) **INFRASTRUCTURE.**—The term “infrastruc-  
4 ture” means infrastructure for renewable or conven-  
5 tional energy production, electricity transmission,  
6 surface transportation, aviation, a port or waterway,  
7 a water resource project, drinking water or waste-  
8 water treatment, broadband, a pipeline, an elemen-  
9 tary school or secondary school (as defined in section  
10 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education  
11 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801)), and an institution  
12 of higher education (as defined in section 101 of the  
13 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001)).

14 (2) **RURAL.**—The term “rural” means any area  
15 located outside—

16 (A) an urbanized area, as determined by  
17 the latest available decennial census conducted  
18 under section 141(a) of title 13, United States  
19 Code; and

20 (B) a community or town that has a popu-  
21 lation equal to or greater than 20,000 inhab-  
22 itants.

23 (3) **RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT.**—The  
24 term “rural infrastructure project” means a project  
25 for infrastructure in a rural area.

1           **TITLE I—DEPARTMENT OF**  
2                           **AGRICULTURE**

3   **SEC. 101. RURAL PARTNERSHIPS OFFICE.**

4           (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Subtitle C of the Department  
5 of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6941  
6 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

7   **“SEC. 237. RURAL PARTNERSHIPS OFFICE.**

8           “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall estab-  
9 lish within the Department the Rural Partnerships Office.

10          “(b) DIRECTOR.—The Rural Partnerships Office  
11 shall be headed by a Director, who shall be appointed by  
12 the President.

13          “(c) FUNCTIONS.—The Secretary, acting through the  
14 Director of the Rural Partnerships Office, shall carry  
15 out—

16                 “(1) subtitle I of the Consolidated Farm and  
17 Rural Development Act; and

18                 “(2) such other technical assistance relating to  
19 rural infrastructure projects (as defined in section 3  
20 of the Reforming, Expanding, and Simplifying In-  
21 vestment for Local Infrastructure to Enhance our  
22 Neighborhoods and Towns Act) as the Secretary de-  
23 termines to be appropriate.”.

24          (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 296(b) of  
25 the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of

1 1994 (7 U.S.C. 7014(b)) is amended by adding at the end  
2 the following:

3 “(11) The authority of the Secretary to carry  
4 out the amendments made to this title by the Re-  
5 forming, Expanding, and Simplifying Investment for  
6 Local Infrastructure to Enhance our Neighborhoods  
7 and Towns Act.”.

8 **SEC. 102. RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PARTNERSHIPS.**

9 The Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act  
10 is amended by inserting after subtitle H (7 U.S.C. 2009cc  
11 et seq.) the following:

12 **“Subtitle I—Rural Infrastructure**  
13 **Partnerships**

14 **“SEC. 385A. DEFINITIONS.**

15 “In this subtitle:

16 “(1) INFRASTRUCTURE.—The term ‘infrastruc-  
17 ture’ has the meaning given the term in section 3 of  
18 the Reforming, Expanding, and Simplifying Invest-  
19 ment for Local Infrastructure to Enhance our  
20 Neighborhoods and Towns Act.

21 “(2) RURAL.—The term ‘rural’ has the mean-  
22 ing given the term in section 3 of the Reforming,  
23 Expanding, and Simplifying Investment for Local  
24 Infrastructure to Enhance our Neighborhoods and  
25 Towns Act.

1           “(3) RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT.—The  
2 term ‘rural infrastructure project’ has the meaning  
3 given the term in section 3 of the Reforming, Ex-  
4 panding, and Simplifying Investment for Local In-  
5 frastructure to Enhance our Neighborhoods and  
6 Towns Act.

7           “(4) RURAL LIAISON.—The term ‘Rural Liai-  
8 son’ means a Rural Liaison designated under section  
9 201(b)(1) of the Reforming, Expanding, and Simpli-  
10 fying Investment for Local Infrastructure to En-  
11 hance our Neighborhoods and Towns Act.

12           “(5) SECRETARY.—The term ‘Secretary’ means  
13 the Secretary, acting through the Director of the  
14 Rural Partnerships Office.

15 **“SEC. 385B. RURAL PARTNERS PROGRAM.**

16           “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall estab-  
17 lish a Rural Partners Program (referred to in this section  
18 as the ‘Program’) to provide technical assistance to im-  
19 prove the delivery, financing, operations, and maintenance  
20 of rural infrastructure projects.

21           “(b) COORDINATION.—In carrying out the Program,  
22 the Secretary shall coordinate with—

23           “(1) technical assistance programs of the De-  
24 partment of Agriculture and the Environmental Pro-  
25 tection Agency;

1           “(2) the Capacity Building for Affordable  
2           Housing and Community Development Program au-  
3           thorized under section 4 of the HUD Demonstration  
4           Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C. 9816 note; Public Law 103-  
5           120);

6           “(3) the rural and Tribal passenger transpor-  
7           tation technical assistance program established  
8           under section 310B(c)(3)(B)(iv); and

9           “(4) any other technical assistance programs  
10          that may impact rural infrastructure projects, in-  
11          cluding programs operated by States.

12          “(c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS.—

13           “(1) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall select,  
14           through a competitive process, not more than 5 or-  
15           ganizations to provide to rural communities technical  
16           assistance under this section.

17           “(2) REQUIREMENTS.—To be eligible for selec-  
18           tion under paragraph (1), an organization shall—

19           “(A) provide technical assistance nation-  
20           ally; and

21           “(B) have the experience and capacity to  
22           provide technical assistance in each State, the  
23           Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the United  
24           States Virgin Islands.

25          “(d) APPLICATIONS.—

1           “(1) INITIAL PROPOSAL.—To be eligible to re-  
2           ceive technical assistance under this section, a rural  
3           community (including a rural passenger transpor-  
4           tation agency) shall submit to the Secretary an ini-  
5           tial proposal containing a basic statement of—

6                   “(A) a description of the technical assist-  
7                   ance under subsection (e) being requested; and

8                   “(B) how the technical assistance would  
9                   improve rural infrastructure in the rural com-  
10                  munity.

11           “(2) APPLICATION ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary  
12           shall coordinate with State offices of the rural devel-  
13           opment mission area to identify a point of contact  
14           who shall assist the rural community with the re-  
15           mainder of the application process.

16           “(3) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary—

17                   “(A) shall not require the initial proposal  
18                   under paragraph (1) to contain any information  
19                   not required under that paragraph; and

20                   “(B) shall determine the requirements for  
21                   the remainder of the application process.

22           “(4) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall con-  
23           sult with the Rural Liaison for any relevant Federal  
24           agencies in reviewing applications under this sub-  
25           section.

1           “(e) ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES.—A technical assistance  
2 provider selected under subsection (c) may provide to a  
3 rural community the application of which is approved  
4 under subsection (d) technical assistance with—

5           “(1) infrastructure project planning;

6           “(2) asset management;

7           “(3) life-cycle accounting;

8           “(4) project delivery;

9           “(5) funding and financing;

10           “(6) regional coordination;

11           “(7) project affordability;

12           “(8) broadband predevelopment work; and

13           “(9) project oversight.

14           “(f) DURATION.—The Secretary shall assign a tech-  
15 nical assistance provider selected under subsection (c) to  
16 a rural community the application of which is approved  
17 under subsection (d) for a period that is not longer than  
18 2 years.

19           “(g) ONSITE PRESENCE REQUIRED.—Personnel of a  
20 technical assistance provider shall be onsite in the rural  
21 community for a significant portion of the period under  
22 subsection (f), as determined by the Secretary.

23           “(h) REPORTS.—A technical assistance provider shall  
24 submit to the Secretary and the Rural Liaison for any  
25 relevant Federal agencies quarterly reports describing the

1 status of activities in each rural community to which the  
2 provider is assigned.

3 **“SEC. 385C. RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE BEST PRACTICES**  
4 **CLEARINGHOUSE.**

5 “The Secretary shall establish an online clearing-  
6 house of best practices specifically targeted to rural infra-  
7 structure project planning, asset management, life-cycle  
8 accounting, project delivery, funding and financing, re-  
9 gional coordination, affordability, and project oversight,  
10 including resources prepared by Federal agencies and ex-  
11 ternal resources.

12 **“SEC. 385D. PREDEVELOPMENT SCOPING GRANT PRO-**  
13 **GRAM.**

14 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a  
15 predevelopment scoping grant program (referred to in this  
16 section as the ‘program’) to provide grants to assist rural  
17 communities in developing cost-effective rural infrastruc-  
18 ture projects, with a particular focus on regionally coordi-  
19 nated or bundled projects.

20 “(b) APPLICATION.—An application for a grant  
21 under the program shall—

22 “(1) require only such documentation as is nec-  
23 essary to demonstrate the potential for a viable  
24 project; and



1           “(A) a bundled project concept;

2           “(B) likely funding sources; and

3           “(C) such other information as is nec-  
4           essary to determine whether the proposed  
5           project is unlikely to be completed but for as-  
6           sistance provided by the Program.

7           “(3) REVIEW.—

8           “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, State  
9           offices of the rural development mission area,  
10          and the Rural Liaison for any relevant Federal  
11          agencies shall review letters of interest sub-  
12          mitted by local, regional, or State entities to de-  
13          termine whether to approve each bundled  
14          project for assistance under the Program.

15          “(B) CONSIDERATION.—In reviewing let-  
16          ters of interest under subparagraph (A), the in-  
17          dividuals and entities described in that subpara-  
18          graph shall consider whether the proposed  
19          project is unlikely to be completed but for as-  
20          sistance provided by the Program.

21          “(d) PROGRAM ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary, in co-  
22          ordination with the Rural Liaisons, shall provide to a  
23          local, regional, or State entity that is approved for assist-  
24          ance under the Program—

1           “(1) technical assistance with the development  
2 of a bundled project, including assistance with iden-  
3 tifying appropriate financing; and

4           “(2) a grant to support project development  
5 and ongoing project management.

6           “(e) COST THRESHOLDS.—

7           “(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of the pro-  
8 grams and laws described in paragraph (2), each  
9 rural infrastructure project that is included in a  
10 bundled project that is approved for assistance  
11 under the Program shall be considered a separate  
12 rural infrastructure project.

13           “(2) PROGRAMS AND LAWS DESCRIBED.—The  
14 programs and laws referred to in paragraph (1)  
15 are—

16           “(A) water or waste disposal grants or di-  
17 rect or guaranteed loans under paragraph (1)  
18 or (2) of section 306(a);

19           “(B) rural water or wastewater technical  
20 assistance and training grants under section  
21 306(a)(14);

22           “(C) emergency community water assist-  
23 ance grants under section 306A;

24           “(D) paragraphs (2)(C) and (5)(C) of sec-  
25 tion 603(b) of title 23, United States Code;

1           “(E) paragraphs (2)(B) and (5)(C) of sec-  
2           tion 5029(b) of the Water Infrastructure Fi-  
3           nance and Innovation Act of 2014 (33 U.S.C.  
4           3908(b));

5           “(F) the program for national infrastruc-  
6           ture investments (commonly known as the ‘Bet-  
7           ter Utilizing Investments to Leverage Develop-  
8           ment (BUILD) discretionary grant program’)  
9           authorized under title I of division L of the  
10          Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (Public  
11          Law 115–141) or a subsequent appropriations  
12          Act; and

13          “(G) a categorical exclusion under the Na-  
14          tional Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42  
15          U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).

16          “(f) VOLUME CAP FOR PRIVATE ACTIVITY BONDS.—  
17          A bundled project that is approved for assistance under  
18          the Program shall be exempt from the volume cap for pri-  
19          vate activity bonds under section 146(d) of the Internal  
20          Revenue Code of 1986.

21          “(g) ELIGIBILITY FOR RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FI-  
22          NANCING FLEXIBILITY.—Except as provided in subsection  
23          (e), a bundled project that is approved for assistance  
24          under the Program shall be considered to be—

1           “(1) a rural infrastructure project for purposes  
2 of the TIFIA program (as those terms are defined  
3 in section 601(a) of title 23, United States Code);  
4 and

5           “(2) a rural project for purposes of the Water  
6 Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014  
7 (33 U.S.C. 3901 et seq).

8           “(h) FEDERAL PERMITTING DASHBOARD.—A bun-  
9 dled project that is approved for assistance under the Pro-  
10 gram shall be considered to be a covered project under  
11 title XLI of the FAST Act (42 U.S.C. 4370m et seq.).

12 **“SEC. 385F. REPORTS.**

13           “The Secretary shall publish on the website of the  
14 Rural Partnerships Office an annual report describing the  
15 activities of the Office, including—

16           “(1) the status of projects funded with grants  
17 provided by the Office;

18           “(2) activities conducted under the Rural Part-  
19 ners Program under section 385B;

20           “(3) private sector investment leveraged by  
21 those projects and activities; and

22           “(4) the activities of the Rural Infrastructure  
23 Bundling Program under section 385E.”.

1 **SEC. 103. RURAL ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOP-**  
2 **MENT.**

3 Section 306(a)(19) of the Consolidated Farm and  
4 Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1926(a)(19)) is amend-  
5 ed—

6 (1) in subparagraph (A), by striking “nonprofit  
7 corporations,” and all that follows through “feder-  
8 ally recognized” and inserting “nonprofit corpora-  
9 tions, rural passenger transportation facilities, In-  
10 dian tribes (as defined in section 4 of the Indian  
11 Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act  
12 (25 U.S.C. 5304)), and federally recognized”; and

13 (2) by adding at the end the following:

14 “(C) PRIORITY FOR CO-LOCATED FACILI-  
15 TIES.—In evaluating applications for grants  
16 under subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall  
17 give priority to a project that co-locates social  
18 services facilities or employment centers with  
19 passenger transportation facilities.”.

20 **SEC. 104. SIMPLIFICATION OF APPLICATION PROCESS.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 days after the  
22 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture  
23 shall consider ways to simplify and streamline the applica-  
24 tion processes for programs of the Department of Agri-  
25 culture that provide loans, grants, or other financing for  
26 rural infrastructure, including by—

1           (1) issuing a notice in the Federal Register re-  
2           requesting public comment on ways to simplify and  
3           streamline those application processes; and

4           (2) evaluating the application processes of other  
5           Federal agencies, such as the Economic Develop-  
6           ment Administration.

7           (b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date  
8           on which the period for public comment under subsection  
9           (a)(1) ends, the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit to  
10          Congress a report describing the actions carried out, if  
11          any, to simplify and streamline the application processes  
12          referred to in subsection (a).

## 13                           **TITLE II—INTERAGENCY** 14                           **COORDINATION**

### 15   **SEC. 201. RURAL LIAISONS.**

16          (a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to es-  
17          tablish Rural Liaisons to improve coordination and proc-  
18          esses across Federal rural programs.

19          (b) DESIGNATION.—

20               (1) IN GENERAL.—Each Federal agency de-  
21               scribed in paragraph (2) shall designate a Rural Li-  
22               aison within the office of the head of the Federal  
23               agency.

24               (2) FEDERAL AGENCIES.—The Federal agen-  
25               cies referred to in paragraph (1) are—

- 1 (A) the Department of Transportation;  
2 (B) the Department of Agriculture;  
3 (C) the Department of Housing and Urban  
4 Development;  
5 (D) the Small Business Administration;  
6 (E) the Department of Education;  
7 (F) the Department of Health and Human  
8 Services;  
9 (G) the Department of Commerce;  
10 (H) the Environmental Protection Agency;  
11 (I) the Corps of Engineers;  
12 (J) the Department of the Interior; and  
13 (K) any other Federal agency that provides  
14 financial assistance, including grants and credit  
15 assistance, to rural communities for activities  
16 related to rural infrastructure, as determined  
17 by the Secretary of Agriculture.

18 (c) RESPONSIBILITIES.—A Rural Liaison designated  
19 under subsection (b)(1) shall—

- 20 (1)(A) review regulations, guidance, and proce-  
21 dures of the agency of the Rural Liaison;  
22 (B) identify any of those regulations, guidance,  
23 or procedures that present a hardship for rural com-  
24 munities; and

1 (C) recommend ways to streamline those regu-  
2 lations, guidance, and procedures;

3 (2) serve as ombudsperson for rural commu-  
4 nities working with the agency of the Rural Liaison  
5 to help address issues and resolve problems;

6 (3) meet regularly with Rural Liaisons of other  
7 Federal agencies to coordinate efforts and identify  
8 ways to coordinate to support rural infrastructure  
9 needs; and

10 (4)(A) advise the head of the agency of the  
11 Rural Liaison about rural issues; and

12 (B) provide feedback to that head of the agency  
13 on the rural impacts of potential activities of the  
14 agency.

15 **SEC. 202. INTERAGENCY RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE TASK**  
16 **FORCE.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Commerce shall  
18 establish a task force (referred to in this section as the  
19 “task force”) to examine ways to coordinate rural infra-  
20 structure programs and requirements across the Federal  
21 Government that support rural infrastructure development  
22 in order—

23 (1) to maximize efficiency;

24 (2) to leverage interagency resources; and

25 (3) to simplify processes for rural applicants.

1 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—

2 (1) FEDERAL MEMBERS.—

3 (A) IN GENERAL.—Each individual listed  
4 in subparagraph (C) shall designate a member  
5 of the agency in which the individual serves to  
6 serve on the task force.

7 (B) QUALIFICATIONS.—A member of the  
8 task force designated under subparagraph (A)  
9 shall hold a position in the agency of deputy  
10 secretary (or the equivalent) or higher.

11 (C) HEADS OF AGENCIES.—The individ-  
12 uals that shall each designate a member of the  
13 task force under subparagraph (A) are the fol-  
14 lowing:

15 (i) The Secretary of Commerce.

16 (ii) The Secretary of Agriculture.

17 (iii) The Secretary of the Interior.

18 (iv) The Secretary of Transportation.

19 (v) The Secretary of Education.

20 (vi) The Secretary of Energy.

21 (vii) The Secretary of Health and  
22 Human Services.

23 (viii) The Administrator of the Envi-  
24 ronmental Protection Agency.

1 (ix) The Chairman of the Federal  
2 Communications Commission.

3 (x) The Administrator of the Small  
4 Business Administration.

5 (2) STATE MEMBERS.—The Secretary of Com-  
6 merce shall appoint to the task force not less than  
7 2 representatives of State rural development coun-  
8 cils, based on—

9 (A) the expertise of the representative in  
10 Federal infrastructure procedures; and

11 (B) geographic diversity.

12 (c) DUTIES.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—The task force shall—

14 (A) examine ways to coordinate Federal  
15 programs and Federal program requirements  
16 that support rural infrastructure projects, in-  
17 cluding by developing a proposed standardized  
18 application;

19 (B) develop, to the extent practicable, com-  
20 mon guidelines that may be used for rural  
21 funding or financing programs across Federal  
22 agencies;

23 (C) identify opportunities to carry out ac-  
24 tivities across Federal agencies to support rural  
25 infrastructure needs; and

1 (D) provide rural communities guidance  
2 on—

3 (i) projects that would be likely to re-  
4 ceive Federal assistance; and

5 (ii) the application process for those  
6 projects.

7 (2) PUBLIC INPUT.—In carrying out the duties  
8 of the task force under paragraph (1)(A), the task  
9 force shall—

10 (A) solicit input from employees of Federal  
11 agencies in field offices and regional offices;  
12 and

13 (B) provide an opportunity for public com-  
14 ment.

15 (d) REPORT.—Not less frequently than annually, the  
16 task force shall submit to Congress a report on the activi-  
17 ties of the task force, including—

18 (1) specific metrics of performance developed by  
19 the task force for rural infrastructure investment  
20 and development; and

21 (2) the progress of the task force toward those  
22 metrics of performance.

1                   **TITLE III—OTHER**  
2           **DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES**

3   **SEC. 301. RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING FLEXI-**  
4                   **BILITY.**

5           (a) TIFIA PROGRAM.—Section 603(b) of title 23,  
6 United States Code, is amended—

7                   (1) in paragraph (2)—

8                           (A) in subparagraph (A), by striking “sub-  
9                           paragraph (B)” and inserting “subparagraphs  
10                           (B) and (C)”; and

11                           (B) by adding at the end the following:

12                           “(C)           RURAL           INFRASTRUCTURE  
13                           PROJECTS.—In the case of a rural infrastruc-  
14                           ture project, the amount of a secured loan  
15                           under this section shall not exceed the lesser  
16                           of—

17                                   “(i) an amount equal to 67 percent of  
18                                   the reasonably anticipated eligible project  
19                                   costs; and

20                                   “(ii) if the secured loan does not re-  
21                                   ceive an investment-grade rating, the  
22                                   amount of the senior project obligations of  
23                                   the project.”; and

24                   (2) in paragraph (5)—

1 (A) in subparagraph (A), in the matter  
2 preceding clause (i), by striking “subparagraph  
3 (B)” and inserting “subparagraphs (B) and  
4 (C)”; and

5 (B) by adding at the end the following:

6 “(C) RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE  
7 PROJECTS.—In the case of a rural infrastruc-  
8 ture project, the final maturity date of the se-  
9 cured loan shall be the earlier of—

10 “(i) 40 years after the date of sub-  
11 stantial completion of the rural infrastruc-  
12 ture project; and

13 “(ii) if the useful life of the rural in-  
14 frastructure project is less than 40 years,  
15 the useful life of the rural infrastructure  
16 project.”.

17 (b) WIFIA.—

18 (1) DEFINITIONS.—Section 5022 of the Water  
19 Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014  
20 (33 U.S.C. 3901) is amended—

21 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (10)  
22 through (15) as paragraphs (11) through (16),  
23 respectively; and

24 (B) by inserting after paragraph (9) the  
25 following:

1           “(10) RURAL PROJECT.—The term ‘rural  
2 project’ means a project receiving financial assist-  
3 ance under this subtitle in an area that is rural (as  
4 defined in section 3 of the Reforming, Expanding,  
5 and Simplifying Investment for Local Infrastructure  
6 to Enhance our Neighborhoods and Towns Act).”.

7           (2) TERMS AND LIMITATIONS.—Section  
8 5029(b) of the Water Infrastructure Finance and  
9 Innovation Act of 2014 (33 U.S.C. 3908(b)) is  
10 amended—

11           (A) in paragraph (2)—

12           (i) by redesignating subparagraphs  
13 (A) and (B) as clauses (i) and (ii), respec-  
14 tively, and indenting appropriately;

15           (ii) in the matter preceding clause (i)  
16 (as so redesignated), by striking “The  
17 amount” and inserting the following:

18           “(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in  
19 subparagraph (B), the amount”; and

20           (iii) by adding at the end the fol-  
21 lowing:

22           “(B) RURAL PROJECTS.—In the case of a  
23 rural project, the amount of a secured loan  
24 under this section shall not exceed the lesser  
25 of—

1 “(i) an amount equal to 67 percent of  
2 the reasonably anticipated eligible project  
3 costs; and

4 “(ii) if the secured loan does not re-  
5 ceive an investment-grade rating, the  
6 amount of the senior project obligations of  
7 the project.”;

8 (B) in paragraph (5)—

9 (i) in subparagraph (A), in the matter  
10 preceding clause (i), by striking “The  
11 final” and inserting “Except as provided in  
12 subparagraphs (B) and (C), the final”; and

13 (ii) by adding at the end the fol-  
14 lowing:

15 “(C) SPECIAL RULE FOR RURAL  
16 PROJECTS.—In the case of a rural project, the  
17 final maturity date of a secured loan under this  
18 section shall be the earlier of—

19 “(i) the date that is 40 years after the  
20 date of substantial completion of the rel-  
21 evant project (as determined by the Sec-  
22 retary or the Administrator, as applicable);  
23 and

24 “(ii) if the useful life of the project  
25 (as determined by the Secretary or Admin-

1           istrator, as applicable) is less than 40  
2           years, the useful life the project.”; and  
3           (C) in paragraph (7)—

4                 (i) in subparagraph (A), by striking  
5           “subparagraph (B)” and inserting “sub-  
6           paragraphs (B) and (C)”;

7                 (ii) by adding at the end the fol-  
8           lowing:

9           “(C) WAIVER.—On request of an eligible  
10          entity, the Secretary or the Administrator, as  
11          applicable, may waive the application fee for—

12                 “(i) a small community water infra-  
13          structure project described in section  
14          5028(a)(2)(B); and

15                 “(ii) a rural project.”.

16          (3) OUTREACH AND STRATEGY DEVELOP-  
17          MENT.—

18                 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Water Infrastruc-  
19          ture Finance and Innovation Act of 2014 (33  
20          U.S.C. 3901 et seq.) is amended by adding at  
21          the end the following:

22          **“SEC. 5036. OUTREACH AND COORDINATION.**

23                 “(a) OUTREACH.—Not later than 180 days after the  
24          date of enactment of this section, the Administrator, in  
25          coordination with the Secretary of Agriculture, shall de-

1 velop an outreach campaign to promote financial assist-  
2 ance under this subtitle to small communities described  
3 in section 5028(a)(2)(B) and communities in areas that  
4 are rural (as defined in section 3 of the Reforming, Ex-  
5 panding, and Simplifying Investment for Local Infrastruc-  
6 ture to Enhance our Neighborhoods and Towns Act).

7 “(b) COORDINATED FUNDING STRATEGY.—

8 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days  
9 after the date of enactment of this section, the Ad-  
10 ministrator, in coordination with the Secretary of  
11 Agriculture, shall develop a coordinated strategy to  
12 ensure that, to the maximum extent practicable, fi-  
13 nancial assistance under this subtitle complements  
14 rural development assistance provided by the Sec-  
15 retary of Agriculture.

16 “(2) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the  
17 date of enactment of this section, the Administrator  
18 and the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit to  
19 Congress a report that includes—

20 “(A) a description of the coordinated strat-  
21 egy developed under paragraph (1);

22 “(B) a description of any steps taken to  
23 implement that coordinated strategy; and

24 “(C) any recommendations for legislative  
25 changes to further improve coordination be-

1           tween this subtitle and rural development as-  
 2           sistance provided by the Secretary of Agri-  
 3           culture.”.

4                   (B) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of  
 5           contents for the Water Resources Reform and  
 6           Development Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–  
 7           121; 128 Stat. 1195) is amended—

8                           (i) by striking the item relating to sec-  
 9                           tion 5034 and inserting the following:

“Sec. 5034. Reports on program implementation.”; and

10                           (ii) by inserting after the item relating  
 11                           to section 5035 the following:

“Sec. 5036. Outreach and coordination.”.

12 **SEC. 302. DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRA-**  
 13 **STRUCTURE.**

14           (a) FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT.—  
 15           Section 603 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act  
 16           (33 U.S.C. 1383) is amended—

17                   (1) in subsection (c)—

18                           (A) in paragraph (11)(B), by striking  
 19                           “and” at the end;

20                           (B) in paragraph (12)—

21                                   (i) in the matter preceding subpara-  
 22                                   graph (A), by striking “(j)” and inserting  
 23                                   “(l)”; and

1                   (ii) in subparagraph (B), by striking  
2                   the period at the end and inserting “;  
3                   and”; and

4                   (C) by adding at the end the following:

5                   “(13) to expand publicly owned treatment  
6                   works to meet demand due to expected population  
7                   growth.”;

8                   (2) in subsection (d)—

9                   (A) in paragraph (1)(A), by striking “the  
10                  lesser of 30 years and the projected” and in-  
11                  serting “the intended”;

12                  (B) by redesignating paragraphs (6) and  
13                  (7) as paragraphs (7) and (8), respectively; and

14                  (C) by inserting after paragraph (5) the  
15                  following:

16                  “(6) to provide technical assistance to waste-  
17                  water utilities, except that not more than 2 percent  
18                  of the funds annually allotted to the State under  
19                  section 604 may be used to provide that technical  
20                  assistance.”;

21                  (3) by redesignating subsection (j) as sub-  
22                  section (l); and

23                  (4) by inserting after subsection (i) the fol-  
24                  lowing:

1 “(j) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR DISADVANTAGED  
2 COMMUNITIES.—

3 “(1) DEFINITION OF DISADVANTAGED COMMU-  
4 NITY.—In this subsection, the term ‘disadvantaged  
5 community’ means the service area of a publicly  
6 owned treatment works that serves a population of  
7 fewer than 10,000 individuals.

8 “(2) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—A State may,  
9 to provide regional coordinators for 1 or more dis-  
10 advantaged communities, use any funds—

11 “(A) set aside in the State water pollution  
12 control revolving fund of the State for technical  
13 assistance under subsection (d)(6); or

14 “(B) provided to the State through a grant  
15 for technical assistance under section 104.

16 “(k) INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT, PROCUREMENT,  
17 AND OWNERSHIP.—In determining whether to provide as-  
18 sistance to a project from the water pollution control re-  
19 volving fund of the State, a State may consider whether  
20 the project would employ innovative management, pro-  
21 curement, or ownership arrangements.”.

22 (b) SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT.—

23 (1) ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTERS REAU-  
24 THORIZATION.—Section 1420(g)(4) of the Safe  
25 Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300g–9(g)(4)) is

1 amended by striking “the fiscal years 1997 through  
2 2003” and inserting “fiscal years 2021 through  
3 2031”.

4 (2) STATE REVOLVING LOAN FUNDS.—Section  
5 1452 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C.  
6 300j–12) is amended—

7 (A) in subsection (a)(2)—

8 (i) in subparagraph (G)(ii)(I)(aa), by  
9 striking “subsection (d)(3)” and inserting  
10 “subsection (d)(1)”; and

11 (ii) by adding at the end the fol-  
12 lowing:

13 “(H) FUTURE GROWTH.—Funds made  
14 available under this section may be used to as-  
15 sist a public water system in expanding the  
16 public water system to meet demand due to ex-  
17 pected population growth.”;

18 (B) in subsection (b)(3)—

19 (i) in subparagraph (A)—

20 (I) in clause (ii), by striking  
21 “and” at the end;

22 (II) in clause (iii), by striking the  
23 period at the end and inserting “;  
24 and”; and

1 (III) by adding at the end the  
2 following:

3 “(iv) facilitate regional system part-  
4 nerships.”; and

5 (ii) by adding at the end the fol-  
6 lowing:

7 “(C) INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT, PRO-  
8 CUREMENT, AND OWNERSHIP.—In establishing  
9 criteria for the distribution of funds from the  
10 State loan fund, a State may include in those  
11 criteria whether a project would develop, em-  
12 ploy, or establish innovative management, pro-  
13 curement, or ownership arrangements.”;

14 (C) in subsection (d)—

15 (i) in paragraph (2), by striking  
16 “paragraph (1)” and inserting “paragraph  
17 (2)”;

18 (ii) by redesignating paragraphs (1),  
19 (2), and (3) as paragraphs (2), (3), and  
20 (1), respectively, and reordering those  
21 paragraphs so as to appear in numerical  
22 order; and

23 (iii) by adding at the end the fol-  
24 lowing:

1           “(4) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—A State may  
 2 use any funds set aside in the State loan fund of the  
 3 State for technical assistance to provide regional co-  
 4 ordinators for 1 or more disadvantaged commu-  
 5 nities.”; and

6           (D) in subsection (f)(1), by striking sub-  
 7 paragraph (C) and inserting the following:

8           “(C) each loan shall have a term not to ex-  
 9 ceed the intended design life of the project;”.

10           (3) SYSTEM PARTNERSHIP GRANTS.—The Safe  
 11 Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.) is  
 12 amended by adding after part F the following:

13           **“PART G—ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS**

14           **“SEC. 1471. SYSTEM PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM.**

15           “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

16           “(1) SYSTEM IN SIGNIFICANT NONCOMPLI-  
 17 ANCE.—The term ‘system in significant noncompli-  
 18 ance’ means—

19           “(A) a water system that is significantly  
 20 noncompliant with regulations with respect to  
 21 drinking water standards under this title; or

22           “(B) a treatment works that is in signifi-  
 23 cant noncompliance with regulations with re-  
 24 spect to effluent limitations under title III of

1 the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33  
2 U.S.C. 1311 et seq.).

3 “(2) TREATMENT WORKS.—The term ‘treat-  
4 ment works’ has the meaning given the term in sec-  
5 tion 212 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act  
6 (33 U.S.C. 1292).

7 “(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Administrator may, to  
8 bring a system in significant noncompliance into compli-  
9 ance with this title and with effluent limitations under title  
10 III of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C.  
11 1311 et seq.), as applicable, authorize the system in sig-  
12 nificant noncompliance to be incorporated into—

13 “(1) a community water system;

14 “(2) a noncommunity water system;

15 “(3) the system operated by an operator of  
16 multiple public water systems; or

17 “(4) the system operated by an operator of  
18 multiple treatment works.

19 “(c) GRANTS.—

20 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator may  
21 provide grants to—

22 “(A) a system described in paragraph (1),  
23 (2), (3), or (4) of subsection (b) that seeks to  
24 incorporate a separate system in significant

1 noncompliance under that subsection to provide  
2 assistance in seeking that incorporation; and

3 “(B) a system in significant noncompliance  
4 that seeks to be incorporated into a water sys-  
5 tem described in paragraph (1), (2), (3), or (4)  
6 of subsection (b).

7 “(2) AMOUNTS.—A grant under paragraph (1)  
8 shall be not more than \$1,000,000.

9 “(d) GRACE PERIOD.—

10 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other  
11 provision of this title or title III of the Federal  
12 Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1311 et  
13 seq.) and subject to paragraph (2), the Adminis-  
14 trator may, to allow time to bring a system in sig-  
15 nificant noncompliance into compliance with this  
16 title or title III of the Federal Water Pollution Con-  
17 trol Act (33 U.S.C. 1311 et seq.), as applicable, sus-  
18 pend financial penalties for noncompliance with this  
19 title or title III of the Federal Water Pollution Con-  
20 trol Act (33 U.S.C. 1311 et seq.), as applicable,  
21 for—

22 “(A) a system in significant noncompli-  
23 ance; and

1           “(B) a system described in paragraph (1),  
2           (2), (3), or (4) of subsection (b) that has incor-  
3           porated a system in significant noncompliance.

4           “(2) TERM.—

5           “(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in  
6           subparagraph (B), the Administrator may sus-  
7           pend the penalties described in paragraph (1)  
8           for a period of not more than 180 days.

9           “(B) EXTENSION.—The Administrator  
10          may, at the discretion of the Administrator, ex-  
11          tend the period described in subparagraph (A)  
12          after a period during which the Administrator  
13          provides notice of the proposed extension and  
14          an opportunity for public comment.

15          “(3) REGULATIONS.—The Administrator shall,  
16          after providing notice and an opportunity for public  
17          comment, promulgate regulations to carry out para-  
18          graph (1).”.

19          (4) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

20                 (A) Section 1459A(c)(2)(A) of the Safe  
21          Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j-  
22          19a(c)(2)(A)) is amended in the matter pre-  
23          ceding clause (i) by striking “1452(d)(3)” and  
24          inserting “1452(d)(1)”.

1                   (B) Section 1459B of the Safe Drinking  
2                   Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j-19b) is amended by  
3                   striking “1452(d)(3)” each place it appears and  
4                   inserting “1452(d)(1)”.

5                   (c) AUDITS AND STUDIES.—

6                   (1) BARRIERS TO DRINKING WATER AND CLEAN  
7                   WATER SYSTEM REGIONALIZATION.—

8                   (A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of  
9                   the Environmental Protection Agency (referred  
10                  to in this subsection as the “Administrator”),  
11                  in consultation with the Secretary of Agri-  
12                  culture, shall conduct an audit with respect to  
13                  the barriers to drinking water and wastewater  
14                  system regionalization.

15                  (B) INCLUSIONS.—In conducting the audit  
16                  under subparagraph (A), the Administrator  
17                  shall focus on—

18                         (i) regulatory impediments to—

19                                 (I) merging system operations;

20                                 (II) issuing multi-system or co-  
21                                 ordinated project procurements;

22                                 (III) accessing Federal funding  
23                                 and financing; and

24                                 (IV) forgiving or consolidating  
25                                 outstanding debt; and

1 (ii) the alignment and coordination of  
2 regionalized technical assistance and guid-  
3 ance among Federal agencies and con-  
4 tracted technical assistance partners and  
5 providers.

6 (C) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after  
7 the date of enactment of this Act, the Adminis-  
8 trator shall submit to Congress a report that—

9 (i) describes the results of the audit  
10 under subparagraph (A); and

11 (ii) includes legislative and regulatory  
12 recommendations necessary to better facili-  
13 tate drinking water and clean water system  
14 partnerships in rural areas.

15 (2) COOPERATIVE PROCUREMENT STUDY.—

16 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller Gen-  
17 eral of the United States shall conduct, and  
18 submit to Congress a report describing the re-  
19 sults of, a study with respect to the use of coop-  
20 erative or joint procurement among water and  
21 wastewater systems in rural areas.

22 (B) INCLUSIONS.—The study under sub-  
23 paragraph (A) shall include—

1 (i) the extent to which rural water  
2 and wastewater systems are currently con-  
3 ducting joint or cooperative procurements;

4 (ii) the costs and benefits of using a  
5 cooperative or joint procurement approach  
6 in rural areas;

7 (iii) the barriers to water and waste-  
8 water systems in rural areas in using coop-  
9 erative or joint procurements; and

10 (iv) recommendations with respect to  
11 ways that the Federal Government can en-  
12 courage greater use of cooperative and  
13 joint procurements among water and  
14 wastewater systems in rural areas.

15 (3) CROSS-CUTTING FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS  
16 STUDY.—Not later than 1 year after the date of en-  
17 actment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit  
18 to the relevant committees of Congress a report de-  
19 scribing potential legislative and regulatory options  
20 for minimizing the costs related to cross-cutting  
21 Federal requirements (such as the requirements  
22 under section 608 of the Federal Water Pollution  
23 Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1388), section 1452(a)(4) of  
24 the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j—

1 12(a)(4)), and similar requirements) in projects in  
2 rural areas that use funds from—

3 (A) a State water pollution control revolv-  
4 ing fund established under title VI of the Fed-  
5 eral Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C.  
6 1381 et seq.); or

7 (B) a State drinking water treatment re-  
8 volving loan fund established under section  
9 1452 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42  
10 U.S.C. 300j–12).

11 **SEC. 303. SOLICITATION OF PUBLIC COMMENT ON CON-**  
12 **DUCTING WATER AUDITS WITH REAC INSPEC-**  
13 **TIONS.**

14 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of Housing and  
15 Urban Development, in coordination with each State hous-  
16 ing finance agency that participates in the Interagency  
17 Physical Inspection Alignment Initiative, shall solicit pub-  
18 lic comment on the costs and benefits of conducting water  
19 audits in conjunction with inspections of multifamily prop-  
20 erties by the Real Estate Assessment Center.

21 (b) **REPORT.**—Not later than 180 days after the date  
22 on which the period for public comment under subsection  
23 (a) ends, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Develop-  
24 ment and each State housing finance agency described in  
25 that subsection shall submit to Congress a report describ-

1 ing the actions carried out, if any, to conduct water audits  
2 as described in that subsection.

### 3 **TITLE IV—ADMINISTRATION**

#### 4 **SEC. 401. EFFECT OF DEFINITION.**

5 Nothing in the definition of the term “rural” in sec-  
6 tion 3 affects any provision of law defining eligibility for  
7 any program for rural infrastructure projects in existence  
8 as of the date of enactment of this Act.

#### 9 **SEC. 402. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

10 There are authorized to be appropriated such sums  
11 as are necessary to carry out this Act and the amendments  
12 made by this Act.