

# ACEC Champions Bold Infrastructure Investment

Infrastructure investment continues to garner significant attention from the Trump administration and in Congress, although timing and specific details of a proposal are still under development.

ACEC National and 49 ACEC Member Organizations signed a broad coalition letter with nearly 400 other stakeholder organizations to President Trump expressing support for, “a balanced infrastructure investment plan that will lift our nation’s economy and improve our transportation network.” The letter called for funding to improve all types of infrastructure throughout the country, including transportation, water, ports and energy projects, both through federal programs as well as incentives for private investment. It also highlighted the need for additional revenue to ensure the long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund, which will

private investment. She also discussed the need to speed up project delivery and promote innovation to improve system performance. A more detailed funding and tax incentive proposal is expected to



Bill Shuster, R-Pa.

be unveiled by the administration in the coming months.

Speaker of the House Paul Ryan indicated that the funding parameters for an infrastructure investment package would be worked out in budget negotiations later in the spring.

Prior to his inauguration, President Trump also announced the creation of an “infrastructure council” headed by two New York real estate developers, Richard LeFrak and Steven Roth. The composition and responsibilities of the group are not well known, but they are expected to be involved in overseeing selection and development of large scale, high profile infrastructure projects that could be financed under the new initiative.

At a kick-off hearing for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Chairman Bill Shuster, R-Pa., highlighted infrastructure investment as a key priority for 2017 and an area ripe for bipartisan congressional action. “President Trump made a promise to the American people that he would reassert America’s greatness. From my perspective, that means ensuring that America is competitive in the crowded global marketplace of today and tomorrow,” said Shuster. “It means reimagining and building a 21st century infrastructure—leveraging resources from all levels of government and the private sector.”



Elaine Chao, Secretary of Transportation

give state and local transportation agencies the funding stability they need to address deferred maintenance and advance critical improvement projects.

In testimony at her confirmation hearing, Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao acknowledged the need to increase funding for core federal programs, in addition to promoting public-private partnerships and leveraging additional



DLITICH/THINKSTOCK

## ACEC Urges Senate to Pass Regulatory Reform

ACEC and a business coalition led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce urged Senate leaders to take up the Regulatory Accountability Act of 2017 (H.R. 5).

H.R. 5 would modernize the federal regulation process. It would increase transparency and input by affected citizens, and it would also require agencies to choose the least costly option unless a more expensive approach is needed in order to protect the public.

The House of Representatives voted 238-183 to approve The Regulatory Accountability Act, and the bill awaits action in the Senate.

BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES

CHIP SOMDEVILLASTAFF/GETTY IMAGES



HAVA/IKAYHAN/THINKSTOCK

## Congress Takes Steps to Repeal Health Care Law

In January, the House and Senate took the first step toward dismantling the Affordable Care Act (ACA) when Congress passed a budget resolution that provides a legislative path to repeal. Congressional committees are now writing legislation that would undo the law.

Although the budget reconciliation process will make repealing certain pieces of the law—such as tax provisions—easier to pass, other parts will need 60 votes in the Senate to move forward. These include insurance reforms and the health insurance exchanges.

At the same time, Congress is focusing on replacing ACA with a plan that centers on access to health insurance and lowering costs. Various ideas are under consideration, including expanded high-risk pools for people with pre-existing conditions, facilitating association health plans (AHPs) like the ACEC Life-Health Trust, allowing insurance to be purchased across state lines and reforming medical liability.

ACEC is working with Congress to support AHPs and to ensure that the ACA replacement provides affordable health insurance options for engineering firms and their employees.

ISSUES ON THE MOVE	WHAT'S NEXT
Infrastructure package	Congressional action in the spring
House passed regulatory reform	Senate action possible in March
Affordable Care Act repeal	Replacement components unveiled before summer

## ACEC and Coalition Allies Seek to Limit Project Labor Agreements

ACEC and other construction industry allies are urging President Trump to eliminate current mandates on the use of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) for federal projects through federal contracting.

Early in his first term, President Obama issued an executive order requiring federal projects in excess of \$25 million to use PLAs, which create a collective bargaining agreement with one or more labor organization that requires companies to recognize unions, use the union hiring hall to obtain workers and pay into multi-employer pension plans that nonunion employees are unlikely to access. This forces employers to pay “double benefits” into existing plans and union plans, and it also places firms opposed to these costly provisions at a significant competitive disadvantage. There are studies showing that PLA mandates increase the cost of construction from 12 to 18 percent when compared to non-PLA projects.

**There are studies showing that PLA mandates increase the cost of construction from 12 to 18 percent when compared to non-PLA projects**

While ACEC was able to secure clarification in the final rule to exclude the engineering industry to ensure the independence of design professionals, the Council has continued to support efforts to eliminate PLAs to prevent potential conflicts with the various roles engineering firms play in project oversight, safety and performance.

The industry groups are calling on the new administration to rescind the executive order and prevent federal agencies from mandating PLAs as a condition for winning federal contracts.

## ACEC SUPPORTS ESTATE TAX REPEAL



TOM WILLIAMS/CONTRIBUTOR/GETTY IMAGES

Rep. Kristi Noem, R-S.D.

ACEC joined with a coalition of business organizations in support of legislation introduced by Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., and Rep. Kristi Noem, R-S.D., to eliminate the estate tax.

The Council has long supported eliminating the estate tax in order to preserve family-owned engineering firms and other businesses. Repeal of the estate tax is one of the provisions in the House Republican tax reform blueprint that was released last year.

Congress is expected to vote on tax reform this year, and ACEC will work with the House Ways and Means Committee to include estate tax repeal in the legislation.



BLOOMBERG/CONTRIBUTOR/GETTY IMAGES

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D.

### For More News

For weekly legislative news, visit ACEC's *Last Word* online at [www.acec.org](http://www.acec.org).