Dear Senators:

On behalf of the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) – the business association of the nation’s engineering industry – I want to convey our organization’s strong support for the Water Resources Development Act of 2016.

ACEC member firms work closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), as well as state and local governments to address critical priorities in flood control, navigation, and other water resource needs. America’s engineering industry also works closely with public and private sector clients to improve the effectiveness and resiliency of drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities.

The Council is supportive of the Committee’s continued focus on engaging non-federal interests in funding and carrying out water resources projects as listed in Title I of the bill. USACE can assist in moving projects through the permitting process and provide project management, when needed. Both non-federal and USACE managed projects should, and most often do, use private engineering firms for engineering, design and other support services. We urge the Committee to include clarifying language in the bill to ensure that this important engagement of the private sector continues.

We are pleased to note that the Committee included Section 7301 in the bill, which provides a simple but critical clarification in the law to facilitate progress in implementing the public-private partnership pilot program authorized in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) in 2014.

ACEC is particularly supportive of provisions in the bill that will improve the Safe Drinking Water Act State Revolving Fund (SRF) program, including language to broaden the scope of projects eligible for SRF funding.

Regarding Section 7105 of the bill, which requires the use of Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) for projects funded through the SRF program which serve communities with populations over 10,000, ACEC strongly supports the QBS requirement, but recommends removing the
population threshold. This change, which will apply the well-established QBS procurement process to all SRF funded projects, will also make the requirement consistent with virtually identical language adopted by Congress for the Clean Water Act SRF program in WRRDA 2014.

ACEC is supportive of the bill’s provisions to address lead contamination in communities around the country, including the crisis in Flint, Michigan, as well as the $1.8 billion in grant funding authorized to address combined sewer overflows and other wet weather discharges. We are also pleased that the Committee included language to create a dedicated trust fund to support water infrastructure projects, funded through fees collected through a voluntary labeling system on consumer products.

Finally, we urge the Committee to include language in the bill that will promote nature-based solutions – such as wetlands, natural floodplains, coastal dunes, and ocean reefs – wherever practicable to reduce flood and storm damage and improve water quality.

Thank you for your consideration of ACEC’s views, and we urge your support for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

David A. Raymond
President and CEO