



Association of Arkansas Counties

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July 29, 2025

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

✓ Director of Member Services
House Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for the SPEED Act – Streamlining Permitting Efficiencies for Every Development Act

Dear Chairman Westerman and Committee Staff,

On behalf of the Association of Arkansas Counties (AAC), we write to express our strong support for the Streamlining Permitting Efficiencies for Every Development (SPEED) Act, legislation that responsibly amends the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to improve permitting efficiency while maintaining essential environmental safeguards.

Counties across Arkansas face substantial challenges due to prolonged delays in permitting critical infrastructure projects. These delays often result from redundant reviews, litigation uncertainty, and a lack of clear timelines—factors that hinder local governments from advancing roads, bridges, water systems, and energy infrastructure vital to economic development and public safety.

The SPEED Act proposes essential reforms, including:

- Establishing definitive timelines for NEPA reviews;
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of lead and cooperating agencies;
- Promoting judicial efficiency by setting reasonable statutes of limitations;
- Increasing transparency and accountability in permitting decisions.

These provisions align with the principles affirmed in the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County, Colorado*, where the Court reiterated that federal jurisdiction and infrastructure oversight should not be fragmented by conflicting

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local vetoes. The Court recognized the importance of a coherent national framework for permitting, particularly when projects cross state or county lines. The decision emphasized that local obstruction should not override federal authority when environmental compliance under NEPA has been adequately demonstrated.

This legal precedent strengthens the policy foundation for the SPEED Act. As the Court observed, "environmental law should not be wielded as a weapon of delay when its procedural safeguards have been met and public benefit is clear." The SPEED Act addresses this very concern by preserving environmental oversight while reducing unnecessary delay.

The Association of Arkansas Counties and our member county judges respectfully urge swift passage of the SPEED Act. It reflects a commonsense, bipartisan approach to modernizing NEPA and empowering communities to meet the infrastructure needs of the 21st century. We stand ready to work with you and your staff to ensure this important legislation becomes law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Villines". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a stylized "V".

Chris Villines
Executive Director
Association of Arkansas Counties
cvillines@arcounties.org