The U.S. Senate approved S. 2848, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), Sept. 15, 2016. The U.S. House of Representatives is still working on its own version of a WRDA bill.

“The U.S. Senate took an important stand today, saying it strongly supports reinvestment in the nation’s drinking water, wastewater and storm water infrastructure,” said David LaFrance, CEO of the American Water Works Assn. “We encourage the House to pass its WRDA bill so that a House-Senate conference can convene as soon as possible to get this bill done before Congress adjourns.”

S. 2848 includes a provision of $70 million, which allows the new Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan program (WIFIA) to begin making loans. In the two previous fiscal years, Congress has provided funds for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set up WIFIA administration. In addition, $100 million has been allocated to the state revolving loan fund program to assist communities with drinking water emergencies. The Senate WRDA bill also contains provisions regarding public education and notification about lead contamination.

“We look forward to working with House and Senate conferees to make sure the education and notification provisions work in the field and dovetail with the upcoming revisions to the federal Lead and Copper Rule,” LaFrance said.

The Senate bill also includes a provision authored by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (R.I.) directing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to study the performance of composites and other materials in water resources projects and make recommendations on their ability to improve the performance of water infrastructure. The provision will make recommendations on how these materials can be used to build structures less susceptible to corrosion and structural degradation.

"Sen. Whitehouse has been a tireless advocate for the composites industry in Rhode Island and around the country," said Tom Dobbins, president of the American Composite Manufacturers Assn. "His efforts to promote the use of composites and other innovative materials in U.S Army Corps projects will make strides toward building out infrastructure that will last longer and perform better than ever before."

Adds Scott Grayson, executive director for the American Public Works Assn. (APWA): “The Senate’s bipartisan support of WRDA shows the importance of preserving our flood control, drinking water and water quality infrastructure. APWA urges the House of Representatives to pass WRDA as well prior to the end of 2016.”

Source: