



Annual National Defense Authorization Act should include amendment to streamline Presidential Permits *BTA supports proposed NDAA amendment to reform international bridge construction permitting*

Background

Language adopted by the Foreign Relations Committee as an amendment to the State Department reauthorization bill would streamline the permitting process for the construction of international bridges.

The State Department reauthorization and the permitting amendment are being proposed as amendments to the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Presidential Permit process overly bureaucratic, needs reform

The Presidential Permit process for border crossings has historically been expensive, cumbersome, and time consuming. Modernized border crossings are of national importance, as they are essential to maintaining the U.S.' competitive standing and ensuring the country's ability to efficiently process international trade and travel. Requiring Presidential Permit applications to be subject to an onerous and overly bureaucratic regulatory regime risks dramatically delaying the completion of needed projects along the border and drives up costs.

Amendment language proposed by Sen. Ted Cruz, which has bipartisan support, would give the State Department 60 days to issue a recommendation to the president on whether to provide permits to four international Texas bridge projects. The president would then have 60 days to make a decision.

The amendment adheres to the practice used by the prior administration where presidential permits could be issued contingent on successful completion of environmental reviews.

Recommendation

The Border Trade Alliance urges the U.S. Senate to include the permitting reform language in its version of the NDAA.

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We believe the inclusion of language around permitting reform in the recently passed Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 is indicative of a desire in both chambers of Congress and in both parties to design a better process toward the completion of infrastructure projects that are of national importance. Furthermore, an improved Presidential Permit process is consistent with the passage of the bipartisan infrastructure law that authorized \$3.4 billion for the construction, modernization, and expansion of 26 land border ports of entry.