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Senate hearing avoids SRF WIN details, AMWA says



According to the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA) in its [Monday Morning Briefing for July 16](#), things got heated on Capitol Hill last week when supporters of the proposed SRF WIN Act clashed with committee members over the bill during a Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee [hearing](#).

According to AMWA, proponents of the SRF WIN Act argued the new bill is necessary to allow rural states to bundle multiple small water infrastructure projects together into a single application for Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program funding.

However, no participants in the hearing acknowledged that small project bundling is already possible through the existing WIFIA program. Critics of the bill were not invited to testify.

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The discussion about SRF WIN came during a hearing called to examine "the long-term value to U.S. taxpayers of low-cost federal infrastructure loans," AMWA said. During the meeting, committee members pushed back against a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate [released](#) last month which found that changes to the WIFIA program in a version of the SRF WIN Act included in a EPW-approved water resources bill would cost the federal government approximately \$2.6 billion over the next 10 years. Committee members said that bill would be revised to lower the budget score before it goes before the full Senate, possibly as soon as this week.

AMWA said the hearing was also used as an opportunity for supporters to advocate in favor of adding SRF WIN as "another tool in the water infrastructure financing toolbox."

AMWA, the American Water Works Association (AWWA) and the Water Environment Federation (WEF) are three of the more prominent water sector organizations that have been critical of the SRF WIN proposal. According to AMWA's update Monday, the association was not invited to testify, but said it did submit a [letter](#) to the EPW Committee that highlighted several problems with the bill that otherwise went unmentioned at the hearing. These include the fact that the current WIFIA already allows states to bundle multiple projects together into a single application, that SRF WIN would charge California, New York and 13 other states higher interest rates for water infrastructure loans than would be paid by smaller and more rural states and that this additional subsidization for rural states would reduce the overall amount of funding available through WIFIA.

The water resources bill that includes the SRF WIN Act could go to the Senate floor as early as this week, though the funding authorization for the SRF WIN provision may be dramatically reduced to address the budget scoring issue. AMWA said it plans to continue to oppose the measure, noting it wants to "make members of Congress aware of the numerous problems" with the legislation.

Source: AMWA

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