

up the hill

*"I'm just a bill
Yes, I'm only a bill
And I'm sitting here on Capitol Hill
Well, it's a long, long journey ..."*

—Schoolhouse Rock

It certainly can take a long time for a bill to become a law. The founding fathers wanted to be sure that new laws passed many hurdles and those that survived were not just passed on a whim. However long a bill's journey may be, though, it must be passed during the same congressional session of its proposal—a period of one year. With 2014's congressional schedule consisting of 113 days (13 days less than in 2013), only a few proposed bills will have the opportunity to become laws.

There are 7,301 bills and resolutions currently before the U.S. Congress. A number of these could potentially affect the water and wastewater industry. Here is a quick peek at where they stand:

Water Resources and Development Act of 2013. This bill

authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop, maintain and support the nation's vital port and waterway infrastructure needs, and support effective flood protection and environmental restoration needs. Historically, Congress has passed such legislation every two years to provide clear direction to the administration and the corps, but no bill has been signed into law since 2007. This bill passed in the House and the Senate, but the Senate made changes and sent it back to the House on Oct. 31, 2013.

Water Infrastructure Resiliency and Sustainability Act of 2013. This bill provides grants to owners or operators of water systems for programs or projects to increase the resiliency or adaptability of the systems to any ongoing or forecasted changes to the hydrologic conditions of a U.S. region. On Sept. 17, 2013, it was assigned to a congressional committee, which will consider it before possibly sending it on to the House or Senate.

Innovative Stormwater Infrastructure Act of 2013. This bill provides essential tools for communities looking to invest in advanced storm water strategies to manage polluted runoff and sewage overflows through green infrastructure. On Nov. 12, 2013, this bill was assigned to a congressional committee, which will consider it before sending it on to the House or Senate.

Clean Water Affordability Act of 2014. This bill amends the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to establish a comprehensive, integrated planning approach to the obligations concerning permits for pollutant discharges of a publicly owned treatment works or municipal separate storm sewer system. On Jan. 14, 2014, this bill was assigned to a congressional committee, which will consider it before possibly sending it on to the House or Senate.

Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act. This bill provides technical assistance to small public water systems to enable them to comply with national primary drinking water regulations. The committees assigned to this bill sent it to the House or Senate for consideration on Feb. 6, 2014.

National Integrated Drought Information System Reauthorization Act of 2014. This bill was introduced on June 19, 2013, to amend the National Integrated Drought Information System Act of 2006 to specify that the National Integrated Drought Information System Program's purpose shall be to better inform and provide for more timely decision making to reduce drought-related impacts and costs. This bill was passed by Congress on Feb. 25, 2014, and goes to the president next.

Only a few of these bills stand a chance of being enacted, but we will continue to track their long journey up the hill.



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