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Targeted Permitting Legislation Introduced

Given that Congress has struggled to pass comprehensive permitting reform, Senators Dave McCormick (R-PA) and Peter Welch (D-VT) recently introduced the REWIRE Act, a bipartisan bill to address certain permitting bottlenecks by making it easier to modernize the electric grid through “reconductoring”, or replacing older transmission wires with advanced conductors capable of doubling grid capacity within existing rights-of-way. The sponsors of the bill claim that streamlining permitting for these projects could save up to \$85 billion by 2035 and \$180 billion by 2050 for costs associated with grid upgrades.

The bill was introduced in response to rapidly rising electricity demand, driven in part by electrification, manufacturing, and data centers.

Washington Wire readers may recall a comprehensive permitting bill, the SPEED Act, which passed the House last year, seeks to narrow the scope of reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and curbs legal challenges, both of which contribute to slow energy and infrastructure projects.

The more narrowly focused REWIRE Act streamlines federal permitting by creating categorical exclusions under NEPA for certain grid upgrades. It also directs the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to incentivize investment in advanced transmission technologies.

Next month, the bill will be considered by the Senate Energy Committee, where changes can be proposed. NAED’s Wes Smith offered the following statement of support:

"Our power grid needs a refresh, and the REWIRE Act is a practical, commonsense, and bipartisan solution offered by Senators McCormick and Welch that will do just that. By modernizing our grid, we can improve performance and reliability today and prepare for the demands of the future. Our distribution warehouse and

services network, spread across the country, stands ready to support the kind of infrastructure buildout that will keep our economy running while lowering costs through new technologies and improved efficiencies.”

White House Releases National AI Policy Framework

On March 20, the White House unveiled a [National Policy Framework for Artificial Intelligence](#). The framework was paired with legislative recommendations that build on President Trump’s December 2025 executive order to advance a unified, innovation-friendly national AI strategy.

The Administration emphasizes that U.S. leadership in AI depends on avoiding a fragmented patchwork of state laws, arguing that an overly prescriptive patchwork approach would raise compliance costs, hinder innovation, and weaken global competitiveness.

The Framework outlines seven policy priorities:

- Protecting children through privacy safeguards and age-assurance tools;
- managing energy costs, enabling infrastructure, and combating AI-enabled fraud;
- safeguarding intellectual property;
- protecting free speech;
- enabling innovation to ensure American AI dominance;
- education for an [AI-Ready Workforce](#);
- establishing federal precedent to preempt state AI laws.

While the framework clearly favors strong federal preemption of conflicting state laws, the document does seek to preserve traditional state authority in areas like consumer protection and land use. Now Congress must decide how much of the President’s AI agenda to advance through the House and Senate.

Outreach on ENERGYSTAR

NAED joined 32 associations in support of the ENERGYSTAR Program as it undergoes a shift in leadership.

The coalition representing consumer product organizations, manufacturing, real estate, retail, and technology sectors expressed their support for transferring leadership of the ENERGY STAR program to the Department of Energy under the recent [Memorandum of Agreement](#) with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The correspondence emphasizes its readiness to partner with DOE to ensure a smooth transition that maintains the program’s voluntary, public-private structure.

Highlighting their industries’ major contributions to GDP and employment, the letter underscores ENERGY STAR’s long-standing success in reducing energy costs and improving efficiency, saving over \$500 billion since 1992. The coalition stresses the importance of keeping ENERGY STAR within the federal government to advance affordability, competitiveness, and responsible energy use.

NAED, MOU Partner CEOs on Capitol Hill

Earlier this month, Wes Smith joined his counterparts with the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), the National Electrical Manufacturers Representatives Association (NEMRA), and the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) in Washington DC. The meetings focused on workforce, trade and tariffs, and permitting reform.

The group first met with Chairman Mike Bost (R-IL), who leads the House Veterans Affairs Committee, to discuss how the industry would benefit from recruiting and hiring military veterans for roles in manufacturing, distribution, and contracting.

Next, the group crossed the Capitol to meet with Senators Todd Young (R-IN) and Peter Welch (D-VT) to discuss trade and tariffs, permitting reform, and workforce issues. The team also met with senior committee staff in the Senate on federal permitting reform to shorten the time it takes to build critical infrastructure.

The following day, the partners met with Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), former Chair of the Senate Energy Committee, who now serves in a key leadership post in the chamber. Senator Barrasso was the lead negotiator in the last Congress who was pushing hard to strike a deal on permitting reform. The Senator was also interested in our efforts to hire veterans into our industry.

Finally, the group had a productive discussion with Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE), a member of the powerful Ways and Means Committee and Chairman of the Trade Subcommittee. Rep. Smith also leads an informal working group of his colleagues who are working to craft a more predictable and effective tariff regime.