

Hicks-Ray Associates

Implementing Strategies, Achieving Success



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TO: WESTCAS Membership

FROM: Hicks-Ray Associates

SUBJECT: Maryland's Senator Cardin Attempts to Use WRDA Reauthorization to Increase EPA Clean Water and Drinking Water SRF Funding

The Senate returned to session this week after its spring recess. The House is scheduled to return this coming Tuesday. Once both Houses of Congress are back at work, one of the top items on their agenda is the reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act or WRDA as it is popularly called. House markup in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is scheduled for April 21 with Senate Environment and Public Works action to follow.

The enthusiasm and focus of both sides of the Hill on WRDA means that it may be one of the few major pieces of legislation that might pass during this session of Congress. Success also means that for the first time since 1992, Congress will have succeeded in returning to a two-year "regular order" cycle for WRDA bills. This is an important step because the water needs of the nation are constantly changing and cannot be addressed by the current process of a WRDA reauthorization ever seven years.

Senator Benjamin Cardin [D: MD] is attempting to use the WRDA reauthorization process as a vehicle for increasing funding for both the USEPA Clean Water and Drinking Water SRF. In February, Senator Cardin introduced S. 2532 which increases the authorization level for Clean Water SRF funding from the current \$5.18 billion to \$9.060 billion and Drinking Water SRF funding from the current \$3.130 billion to \$5.50 billion. He has announced that he will try and fold the provisions of S. 2532 into the WRDA reauthorization bill.

In a press release accompanying the introduction of his legislation, Senator Cardin noted that replacement of drinking water and clean water infrastructure over the next 20 years is estimated to cost nearly \$33 billion every year while the Federal government is investing only about \$2 billion annually in helping to meet this need.

Few would deny that there is an infrastructure funding challenge facing the nation. It will be interesting to see how Senator Cardin navigates through the WRDA reauthorization process including the fact that his effort will add significantly to the cost of the reauthorization that will be reflected in the "score" which the Congressional budget office gives the bill. The Clean Water SRF has been due for reauthorization since 1992 and the Drinking Water SRF since 2003. Could WRDA reauthorization be a means to address both of these challenges?

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