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Dam Safety and Security Act Becomes Law

On Dec. 2, President Bush signed the Dam Safety and Security Act of 2002, now Public Law 107-310. The Act cleared the Senate by unanimous consent on November 14th, and was passed in the House on September 5th by a vote of 401-2.

H.R. 4727, as introduced by Congressman Bill Shuster (R-PA), not only sought reauthorization of the five-year-old National Dam Safety Program, but acknowledged the need for keeping dams safe from terrorist attacks, as well as from ordinary causes, such as extreme storms or lack of maintenance.

The new law provides authority for the federal government to implement procedures to increase security around dams, and authorizes \$34.4 million for the National Dam Safety Program over four years:

- \$6 million per year for grants to state dam safety programs - which regulate 95% of the more than 78,000 dams in the United States - and miscellaneous projects, including the National Dam Safety Review Board, reports to Congress, and public awareness activities
- \$1.5 million per year for dam safety research
- \$500,000 per year for training
- \$600,000 per year the Federal Emergency Management Administration to administer the program, which also includes technology transfer and coordination between state and federal agencies

According to Lori Spragens, Executive Director of the Association of State Dam Safety Officials: "A lot of people deserve credit for the reauthorization, especially ASDSO Legislative Committee chairman Brad Iarossi, ASCE legislative consultant Brian Pallasch, members of ASDSO's Reauthorization Committee and the many ASCE and ASDSO members who, during the past year, visited their representatives on Capitol Hill in support of reauthorization of the National Dam Safety Act."

"As a state regulator, I truly appreciate the importance of this legislation," commented Doug Johnson, president of the Association of State Dam Safety Officials. "The benefits of dams are matched by their potential risk to the public. The assistance of the National Dam Safety Program helps state and federal regulators minimize this risk while ensuring that vital lifeline services provided by dams, such as hydropower and domestic and industrial water supply, are uninterrupted."

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The Association of State Dam Safety Officials is a national, not-for-profit organization made up of over 2,000 dam safety officials from federal, state and local governments, the private sector, and academia. The goal of ASDSO is to improve dam safety and state dam safety programs in the U.S.