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House Committee Approves Dam Safety and Security Act

This morning the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved the National Dam Safety and Security Act of 2002 (HR 4727).

Congressman Bill Shuster (R-PA) of the 9th Congressional District in Pennsylvania championed the reauthorization of the National Dam Safety Program by introducing this critical dam safety legislation.

“We rely so much on dams for drinking water, for protection from floods, hydroelectric power, irrigation and recreation,” remarked Congressman Shuster. “We do not want to overlook the importance of dam safety, and we never again want to bear the burden of another tragic dam failure like the Johnstown Flood that killed 2,209 people in Pennsylvania.”

The bill continues an important and successful national program, administered by FEMA, with the purpose of improving the safety and security of the nation’s dams. This program will enable FEMA to continue to lead national efforts including research, technology transfer, coordination between state and federal agencies, and much needed training for state dam safety engineers. The grant assistance component of the bill provides vital support for the improvement of state dam safety programs, which regulate 95% of the more than 78,000 dams in the United States.

Dams provide many benefits, including flood protection, drinking water, hydroelectric power, irrigation and recreation. Dams are also innately hazardous structures. Their failure or improper operation can result in loss of human life, economic loss, lifeline disruption and environmental damage. Dams have recently been listed as potential targets of intentional acts of terrorism. This bill will provide federal leadership and assistance to the programs that shoulder the enormous burden of ensuring the safety of U.S. dams.

“The Association of State Dam Safety Officials applauds Congressman Shuster’s foresight and hard work,” commented Brad Iarossi, Chairman of the ASDSO Legislative Committee. “Mr. Shuster recognized the importance of this modest investment in preventing dam failures and protecting the lives and property at risk below the nation’s dams. The Association and the millions of Americans who rely on and live below dams are grateful for his leadership and strength.”

The Association of State Dam Safety Officials is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to improving dam safety through research, education and communication.