U.S. Senator Thad Cochran Asks President Obama to Cease Executive Action on Floodplain Standard

ARLINGTON, VA – Today, U.S. Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi wrote a letter to President Obama requesting that an expansive new federal floodplain management standard, being readied by a multi-agency task force for unilateral issuance by the Office of the President, be stopped to allow for public and congressional input. The proposed Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, developed without the benefit of open public involvement, would direct federal agencies to increase federal floodplain requirements thereby redefining conditions of eligibility and acceptance for a broad swath of federally funded activities across the country.

“While seeking to ensure federal investments are resilient to floods and other hazards is a commendable goal, compelling government agencies to spend taxpayer dollars to mitigate against undefined threats is premature. The cascading economic effects this action could have on coastal and riverine economies nationwide are significant. The public deserves to understand the costs, benefits, and scientific rationale behind any such standard before it is issued,” Cochran wrote to the President.

The new standard could dramatically expand floodplain area designations around the United States while applying prohibitions on federal investments, expenditures and initiatives that extend well beyond simple federal facility and agency operations. The Federal Flood Risk Management Standard could apply to a much broader range of federal activities including: permit issuance, emergency preparation response and recovery programs administered by the US Army Corps (PL 84-99 eligibility); USDA agricultural assistance programs; Federal highway aid and USDOT TIGER grants; HUD CDBG grants; Federal loan guarantees; and quite possibly FEMA flood insurance, floodplain management and disaster response programs.

Our organizations support the efforts by Senator Cochran to initiate a careful examination of any action to redefine permissible floodplain activities and management requirements. We are grateful for his leadership and commitment to full, fair and open public involvement, and encouraged by the bipartisan cooperation of Congress on issues related to flood risk. Further, we stand ready to work with all parties to achieve our shared goal of increasing protections for the American public and its precious resources.

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