

March 5, 2024

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rogers
Chair, Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Pallone,

The undersigned organizations represent construction contractors, manufacturers, distributors and other service providers, pipeline operators, labor unions, professionals in surveying, mapping and engineering, and others engaged in construction of underground facilities, and have a vested interest in pipeline safety. These organizations have a vested interest in legislation to be considered by the Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee that would reauthorize the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) and the nation's pipeline safety program.

The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved the Promoting Innovation in Pipeline Efficiency and Safety Act of 2023 (PIPES Act) on December 6, 2023. Section 18 of the PIPES Act addresses the enduring problem of underground facility strikes during excavation. The provision includes language that would update PHMSA's assessment criteria for State Damage Prevention Programs and described additional leading practices state programs should consider implementing to prevent excavation damage to pipelines and other underground utilities. The undersigned organizations support inclusion of this language in the E&C Committee's pipeline safety reauthorization legislation.

Need for GIS Mapping

Optimal integration and safeguarding of utility infrastructure on projects begins early in the planning and design stages. Understanding utility related risks in advance and developing designs that mitigate these risks is achieved using industry-driven standards and utility engineering best practices. Standardized digital data on utility infrastructure yields better construction planning and execution by providing excavators with well-contrived designs that avoid or mitigate utility conflicts. Virtual design and construction technologies eliminate potential for damages well before construction begins; moreover, these methods expedite construction, providing tremendous cost savings on projects. Consistent success is predicated upon: 1) professionally investigating and documenting existing utilities early in design; and 2) acquiring accurate digital as-built data on all newly installed and exposed utilities.

Sec. 13 of the takes needed steps toward improved pipeline mapping and underground facility locating. Specifically, the bill requires states to demonstrate adoption or progress toward adopting several leading practices within their damage prevention programs as criteria for applications to receive PHMSA damage prevention grant dollars. These leading practices include "require the use of commercially available technologies to locate underground facilities, such as geographic information systems..."

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 provided an unprecedented \$550 billion in new investments in American infrastructure, and a significant portion of those dollars will go toward improvements to underground systems. This also means an unprecedented amount of excavation activity is coming our way. The language in Sec. 13 takes needed steps to encourage states to employ technologies such as GIS mapping along with published standards for documenting utility infrastructure, which will: 1) improve the damage prevention process; 2) expedite construction projects; and 3) enable better accommodation and management of utilities within public properties and right-of-ways.

Therefore, these organizations support passage of the Promoting Innovation in Pipeline Efficiency and Safety Act of 2023. We thank you for your consideration.

American Society of Civil Engineers
Associated Equipment Distributors
Association of Equipment Manufacturers
Distribution Contractors Association
Laborers International Union of North America
Plastics Pipe Institute
United Association of Union Plumbers and Pipefitters