

Stimulating Thoughts



On Feb. 17, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), a \$787-billion economic stimulus package that had been a national focal point for months prior and continues to dominate the headlines.

Modernizing the U.S. health care system, improving education programs and—key to the storm water industry—bringing crumbling infrastructure up to date are among the new legislation's various goals. One of the most significant public spending programs since World War II, the ARRA

will sustain approximately 3.5 million jobs and pave the way for economic success, according to the federal government.

Of the \$111 billion the ARRA has dedicated to infrastructure and science, about \$27.5 billion will benefit highway projects and \$12 billion will go toward water projects, including \$4.6 billion for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which may prove to be the most valuable allocation in terms of storm water.

Vice President Biden is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the ARRA, but you, too, can monitor its progress as a storm water professional and taxpayer by visiting www.recovery.gov. This resource features the bill's full text, a timeline, state-by-state job-impact estimates and more. Once money begins changing hands, the website promises to offer state map-tracking tools.

Groups including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Water Environment Federation have issued formal statements supporting the efforts of the ARRA and outlining their roles in stimulus activities. On the flip side, some prominent political leaders and business executives have been outspoken in arguing that the bill does not invest enough money in infrastructure and that any stimulus effect will be short-lived.

The ARRA is not a quick fix that will heal our nation's crippled economy or close up our some \$2-trillion infrastructure gap—today, next year or in the coming decade. It's not fair to ask so much of one stimulus package; the legislation is a stepping stool for infrastructure, and we need a ladder. Investing in safe, sustainable structures, facilities and waterways is a smart (and almost inevitable) move on the U.S. government's part, and I applaud the allocation. I only wish that the White House had boosted transportation and water professionals a bit higher by designating more money for their sectors, as additional funding is certainly warranted, would have been put to good use and could have strengthened construction and employment outcomes.

SWS wants to hear your thoughts on the transportation and water infrastructure components of the ARRA. Please visit our website, www.estormwater.com, and send me a message sharing your stimulus package opinions and stories.

Caitlin Cunningham, managing editor
ccunningham@sgcmail.com

STORM WATER SOLUTIONS

Scranton Gillette Communications, Inc.
 3030 W. Salt Creek Ln. #201, Arlington Heights, IL 60005
 tel: 847.391.1000 fax: 847.390.0408

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Internet Representative Michael Mansour
mmansour@sgcmail.com • 480.941.0510 x16
Reprint Coordinator Adrienne Miller
amiller@sgcmail.com

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gtres@sgcmail.com • 480.941.0510 x15
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