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(Original Signature of Member)

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R.

To provide for integrated plan permits, to establish an Office of the Municipal Ombudsman, to promote green infrastructure, and to require the revision of financial capability guidance.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. LATTA (for himself, Mr. JOYCE of Ohio, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. SMUCKER, and Ms. FUDGE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To provide for integrated plan permits, to establish an Office of the Municipal Ombudsman, to promote green infrastructure, and to require the revision of financial capability guidance.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Water Infrastructure
5 Flexibility Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEFINITION OF ADMINISTRATOR.**

2 In this Act, the term “Administrator” means the Ad-
3 ministrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

4 **SEC. 3. INTEGRATED PLANS.**

5 (a) INTEGRATED PLANS.—Section 402 of the Fed-
6 eral Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1342) is
7 amended by adding at the end the following:

8 “(s) INTEGRATED PLAN PERMITS.—

9 “(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

10 “(A) GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.—The
11 term ‘green infrastructure’ means the range of
12 measures that use plant or soil systems, per-
13 meable pavement or other permeable surfaces
14 or substrates, stormwater harvest and reuse, or
15 landscaping to store, infiltrate, or
16 evapotranspire stormwater and reduce flows
17 to sewer systems or to surface waters.

18 “(B) INTEGRATED PLAN.—The term ‘inte-
19 grated plan’ has the meaning given in Part III
20 of the Integrated Municipal Stormwater and
21 Wastewater Planning Approach Framework,
22 issued by the Environmental Protection Agency
23 and dated June 5, 2012.

24 “(C) MUNICIPAL DISCHARGE.—

25 “(i) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘munic-
26 ipal discharge’ means a discharge from a

1 treatment works (as defined in section
2 212) or a discharge from a municipal
3 storm sewer under subsection (p).

4 “(ii) INCLUSION.—The term ‘municipal
5 discharge’ includes a discharge of
6 wastewater or storm water collected from
7 multiple municipalities if the discharge is
8 covered by the same permit issued under
9 this section.

10 “(2) INTEGRATED PLAN.—

11 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator (or
12 a State, in the case of a permit program ap-
13 proved under subsection (b)) shall inform a mu-
14 nicipal permittee or multiple municipal permit-
15 tees of the opportunity to develop an integrated
16 plan.

17 “(B) SCOPE OF PERMIT INCORPORATING
18 INTEGRATED PLAN.—A permit issued under
19 this subsection that incorporates an integrated
20 plan may integrate all requirements under this
21 Act addressed in the integrated plan, including
22 requirements relating to—

23 “(i) a combined sewer overflow;

1 “(ii) a capacity, management, oper-
2 ation, and maintenance program for sani-
3 tary sewer collection systems;

4 “(iii) a municipal stormwater dis-
5 charge;

6 “(iv) a municipal wastewater dis-
7 charge; and

8 “(v) a water quality-based effluent
9 limitation to implement an applicable
10 wasteload allocation in a total maximum
11 daily load.

12 “(3) COMPLIANCE SCHEDULES.—

13 “(A) IN GENERAL.—A permit for a munic-
14 ipal discharge by a municipality that incor-
15 porates an integrated plan may include a sched-
16 ule of compliance, under which actions taken to
17 meet any applicable water quality-based effluent
18 limitation may be implemented over more than
19 1 permit term if the compliance schedules are
20 authorized by State water quality standards.

21 “(B) INCLUSION.—Actions subject to a
22 compliance schedule under subparagraph (A)
23 may include green infrastructure if imple-
24 mented as part of a water quality-based effluent
25 limitation.

1 “(C) REVIEW.—A schedule of compliance
2 may be reviewed each time the permit is re-
3 newed.

4 “(4) EXISTING AUTHORITIES RETAINED.—

5 “(A) APPLICABLE STANDARDS.—Nothing
6 in this subsection modifies any obligation to
7 comply with applicable technology and water
8 quality-based effluent limitations under this
9 Act.

10 “(B) FLEXIBILITY.—Nothing in this sub-
11 section reduces or eliminates any flexibility
12 available under this Act, including the authority
13 of—

14 “(i) a State to revise a water quality
15 standard after a use attainability analysis
16 under section 131.10(g) of title 40, Code
17 of Federal Regulations (or a successor reg-
18 ulation), subject to the approval of the Ad-
19 ministrator under section 303(c); and

20 “(ii) the Administrator or a State to
21 authorize a schedule of compliance that ex-
22 tends beyond the date of expiration of a
23 permit term if the schedule of compliance
24 meets the requirements of section 122.47
25 of title 40, Code of Federal Regulations

1 (as in effect on the date of enactment of
2 this subsection).

3 “(5) CLARIFICATION OF STATE AUTHORITY.—

4 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in section
5 301(b)(1)(C) precludes a State from author-
6 izing in the water quality standards of the
7 State the issuance of a schedule of compliance
8 to meet water quality-based effluent limitations
9 in permits that incorporate provisions of an in-
10 tegrated plan.

11 “(B) TRANSITION RULE.—In any case in
12 which a discharge is subject to a judicial order
13 or consent decree as of the date of enactment
14 of this subsection resolving an enforcement ac-
15 tion under this Act, any schedule of compliance
16 issued pursuant to an authorization in a State
17 water quality standard shall not revise a sched-
18 ular of compliance in that order or decree unless
19 the order or decree is modified by agreement of
20 the parties and the court.”.

21 (b) MUNICIPAL OMBUDSMAN.—

22 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established
23 within the Office of the Administrator an Office of
24 the Municipal Ombudsman.

1 (2) GENERAL DUTIES.—The duties of the mu-
2 nicipal ombudsman shall include the provision of—

3 (A) technical assistance to municipalities
4 seeking to comply with the Federal Water Pol-
5 lution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.) and
6 the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300f
7 et seq.); and

8 (B) information to the Administrator to
9 help the Administrator ensure that agency poli-
10 cies are implemented by all offices of the Envi-
11 ronmental Protection Agency, including regional
12 offices.

13 (3) ACTIONS REQUIRED.—The municipal om-
14 budsman shall work with appropriate offices at the
15 headquarters and regional offices of the Environ-
16 mental Protection Agency to ensure that the munici-
17 pality seeking assistance is provided information—

18 (A) about available Federal financial as-
19 sistance for which the municipality is eligible;

20 (B) about flexibility available under the
21 Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C.
22 1251 et seq.) and, if applicable, the Safe Drink-
23 ing Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.); and

24 (C) regarding the opportunity to develop
25 an integrated plan, as defined in section

1 402(s)(1)(B) of the Federal Water Pollution
2 Control Act (as added by subsection (a)).

3 (4) INFORMATION SHARING.—The municipal
4 ombudsman shall publish on the website of the Envi-
5 ronmental Protection Agency—

6 (A) general information relating to—

7 (i) the technical assistance referred to
8 in paragraph (2)(A);

9 (ii) the financial assistance referred to
10 in paragraph (3)(A);

11 (iii) the flexibility referred to in para-
12 graph (3)(B); and

13 (iv) any resources related to inte-
14 grated plans developed by the Adminis-
15 trator; and

16 (B) a copy of each permit, order, or judi-
17 cial consent decree that implements or incor-
18 porates an integrated plan.

19 (c) MUNICIPAL ENFORCEMENT.—Section 309 of the
20 Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1319) is
21 amended by adding at the end the following:

22 “(h) IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED PLANS
23 THROUGH ENFORCEMENT TOOLS.—

24 “(1) IN GENERAL.—In conjunction with an en-
25 forcement action under subsection (a) or (b) relating

1 to municipal discharges, the Administrator shall in-
2 form a municipality of the opportunity to develop an
3 integrated plan, as defined in section 402(s).

4 “(2) MODIFICATION.—Any municipality under
5 an administrative order under subsection (a) or set-
6 tlement agreement (including a judicial consent de-
7 cree) under subsection (b) that has developed an in-
8 tegrated plan consistent with section 402(s) may re-
9 quest a modification of the administrative order or
10 settlement agreement based on that integrated
11 plan.”.

12 (d) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 2 years
13 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator
14 shall submit to the Committee on Environment and Public
15 Works of the Senate and the Committee on Transpor-
16 tation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives
17 and make publicly available a report on each integrated
18 plan developed and implemented through a permit, order,
19 or judicial consent decree since the date of publication of
20 the “Integrated Municipal Stormwater and Wastewater
21 Planning Approach Framework” issued by the Environ-
22 mental Protection Agency and dated June 5, 2012, includ-
23 ing a description of the control measures, levels of control,
24 estimated costs, and compliance schedules for the require-
25 ments implemented through an integrated plan.

1 **SEC. 4. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROMOTION.**

2 Title V of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act
3 (33 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) is amended—

4 (1) by redesignating section 519 (33 U.S.C.
5 1251 note) as section 520; and

6 (2) by inserting after section 518 (33 U.S.C.
7 1377) the following:

8 **“SEC. 519. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY GREEN**
9 **INFRASTRUCTURE PROMOTION.**

10 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall ensure
11 that the Office of Water, the Office of Enforcement and
12 Compliance Assurance, the Office of Research and Devel-
13 opment, and the Office of Policy of the Environmental
14 Protection Agency promote the use of green infrastructure
15 in and coordinate the integration of green infrastructure
16 into, permitting programs, planning efforts, research,
17 technical assistance, and funding guidance.

18 “(b) DUTIES.—The Administrator shall ensure that
19 the Office of Water—

20 “(1) promotes the use of green infrastructure in
21 the programs of the Environmental Protection Agen-
22 cy; and

23 “(2) coordinates efforts to increase the use of
24 green infrastructure with—

25 “(A) other Federal departments and agen-
26 cies;

1 “(B) State, tribal, and local governments;
2 and

3 “(C) the private sector.

4 “(c) REGIONAL GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PRO-
5 MOTION.—The Administrator shall direct each regional of-
6 fice of the Environmental Protection Agency, as appro-
7 priate based on local factors, and consistent with the re-
8 quirements of this Act, to promote and integrate the use
9 of green infrastructure within the region that includes—

10 “(1) outreach and training regarding green in-
11 frastructure implementation for State, tribal, and
12 local governments, tribal communities, and the pri-
13 vate sector; and

14 “(2) the incorporation of green infrastructure
15 into permitting and other regulatory programs,
16 codes, and ordinance development, including the re-
17 quirements under consent decrees and settlement
18 agreements in enforcement actions.

19 “(d) GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE INFORMATION-SHAR-
20 ING.—The Administrator shall promote green infrastruc-
21 ture information-sharing, including through an Internet
22 website, to share information with, and provide technical
23 assistance to, State, tribal, and local governments, tribal
24 communities, the private sector, and the public regarding
25 green infrastructure approaches for—

- 1 “(1) reducing water pollution;
- 2 “(2) protecting water resources;
- 3 “(3) complying with regulatory requirements;
- 4 and
- 5 “(4) achieving other environmental, public
- 6 health, and community goals.”.

7 **SEC. 5. FINANCIAL CAPABILITY GUIDANCE.**

8 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 (1) AFFORDABILITY.—The term “affordability”

10 means, with respect to payment of a utility bill, a

11 measure of whether an individual customer or house-

12 hold can pay the bill without undue hardship or un-

13 reasonable sacrifice in the essential lifestyle or

14 spending patterns of the individual or household, as

15 determined by the Administrator.

16 (2) FINANCIAL CAPABILITY.—The term “finan-

17 cial capability” means the financial capability of a

18 community to make investments necessary to make

19 water quality or drinking water improvements.

20 (3) GUIDANCE.—The term “guidance” means

21 the guidance published by the Administrator entitled

22 “Combined Sewer Overflows—Guidance for Finan-

23 cial Capability Assessment and Schedule Develop-

24 ment” and dated February 1997, as applicable to

25 the combined sewer overflows and sanitary sewer

1 overflows guidance published by the Administrator
2 entitled “Financial Capability Assessment Frame-
3 work” and dated November 24, 2014.

4 (b) USE OF MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME.—The
5 Administrator shall not use median household income as
6 the sole indicator of affordability for a residential house-
7 hold.

8 (c) REVISED GUIDANCE.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
10 the date of completion of the National Academy of
11 Public Administration study to establish a definition
12 and framework for community affordability required
13 by Senate Report 114–70, accompanying S. 1645
14 (114th Congress), the Administrator shall revise the
15 guidance described in subsection (a)(3).

16 (2) USE OF GUIDANCE.—Beginning on the date
17 on which the revised guidance referred to in para-
18 graph (1) is finalized, the Administrator shall use
19 the revised guidance in lieu of the guidance de-
20 scribed in subsection (a)(3).

21 (d) CONSIDERATION AND CONSULTATION.—

22 (1) CONSIDERATION.—In revising the guidance,
23 the Administrator shall consider—

24 (A) the recommendations of the study re-
25 ferred to in subsection (c) and any other rel-

1 evant study, as determined by the Adminis-
2 trator;

3 (B) local economic conditions, including
4 site-specific local conditions that should be
5 taken into consideration in analyzing financial
6 capability;

7 (C) other essential community investments;

8 (D) potential adverse impacts on distressed
9 populations, including the percentage of low-in-
10 come ratepayers within the service area of a
11 utility and impacts in communities with dis-
12 parate economic conditions throughout the en-
13 tire service area of a utility;

14 (E) the degree to which rates of low-in-
15 come consumers would be affected by water in-
16 frastructure investments, the use of rate struc-
17 tures, and customer assistance programs to ad-
18 dress the rates of low-income consumers;

19 (F) an evaluation of an array of factors,
20 the relative importance of which may vary
21 across regions and localities; and

22 (G) the appropriate weight for economic,
23 public health, and environmental benefits asso-
24 ciated with improved water quality.

1 (2) CONSULTATION.—Any revised guidance
2 issued to replace the guidance shall be developed in
3 consultation with stakeholders.

4 (e) PUBLICATION AND SUBMISSION.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—On completion of the revi-
6 sion of the guidance, the Administrator shall publish
7 in the Federal Register and submit to the Com-
8 mittee on Environment and Public Works of the
9 Senate and the Committee on Transportation and
10 Infrastructure of the House of Representatives the
11 revised guidance.

12 (2) EXPLANATION.—If the Administrator
13 makes a determination not to follow 1 or more rec-
14 ommendations of the study referred to in subsection
15 (c)(1), the Administrator shall include in the publi-
16 cation and submission under paragraph (1) an ex-
17 planation of that decision.

18 (f) EFFECT.—Nothing in this section preempts or
19 interferes with any obligation to comply with any Federal
20 law, including the Federal Water Pollution Control Act
21 (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.).