

Federal Land Access Act

Introduced by Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA), co-sponsored by EPW Chairman Jim Inhofe (R-OK) and Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV).

The Federal Land Access Act would amend the Mineral Leasing Act to allow the Secretary of the Interior to grant right-of-ways for natural gas pipelines that travel across National Park Service land. It continues the original intent of the right-of-ways process by allowing the Secretary of the Interior to disseminate quick decisions.

Natural gas pipelines were not common when these statutes were enacted in the early 20th century and regulations have failed to keep up with technological advances to the detriment of our energy infrastructure. Natural gas pipelines were not intentionally excluded from the right-of-way process and consumers should not have to pay an additional energy cost premium because of a technicality. In fact, until the 1980s, natural gas pipeline projects were included in the right-of-way process because the Department of the Interior deemed that they had the authority to do so based on the spirit of the law.

Current regulatory constraints forbid these right-of-ways from occurring without project-specific legislation by the Congress. The current burdensome process has caused unnecessary delays, and in some cases, inconsistent outcomes. Many projects have waited years for congressional action only to have to wait even longer for the Department of Interior to make their final determination. This legislation removes unnecessary restrictions and creates a sensible streamlined process that will not adversely affect any Department of Interior environmental review.

What this legislation achieves:

- Removes complicated permitting regulations that slow or even stop viable natural gas pipeline projects
- Continues the original intent of the right-of-ways process by allowing the Secretary of the Interior to disseminate quick decisions
- Restores greater certainty to the permitting process
- Keeps environmental review process fully intact
- Relieves Congress of the obligation to review all applications for natural gas pipeline rights-of-way across National Park Service lands
- Helps to protect American energy customers from sky-rocketing energy costs