

Duckworth's bipartisan bill to support Illinois jobs becomes law

May 12 2017 5:24 PM



WASHINGTON, DC - Just over 4 months after she was sworn in as a U.S. Senator, Tammy Duckworth's (D-IL) first bill became law today in record time. The bipartisan legislation, which was signed by the President today, passed the Senate unanimously just 64 days into Duckworth's first term and passed the House of Representatives late last month. The bill's signing today marks the fastest time any current Senator has passed a bill after being sworn in. Duckworth's new law supports Illinois jobs and prevents infrastructure projects from becoming ensnared in needless bureaucratic delays by rolling back a misguided U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) rule that had

enabled the governors of neighboring states to delay or block infrastructure improvements in Illinois. A DOT analysis estimated the law will save taxpayers an estimated \$86.3 million annually.

“When I was sworn in as Illinois’s newest U.S. Senator, I said I was eager to get to work on common-sense solutions for Illinois families that members on both sides of the aisle can agree on,” said Senator Duckworth. “My first Senate bill and the speed at which it has become law shows that I was serious. Red tape shouldn’t hurt our economy or stifle job growth and I want to thank my congressional colleagues who played an important role in enacting this important legislation. I’ll keep working to support hard-working Illinoisans and help grow good-paying Illinois jobs.”

To secure the legislation’s passage, Duckworth assembled a bipartisan coalition of co-sponsors: U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) and Todd Young (R-IN). Rep. Dan Lipinski (IL-3) sponsored the companion measure in the House.

“With so many local transportation projects that need to get done, we could not allow the federal government to put another obstacle in the way,” said Lipinski. “I’m happy we were able to get this important bill for local transportation signed into law, and I am hopeful that this bipartisan action will pave the way for more cooperation when it comes to fixing our nation’s infrastructure. I look forward to continuing to work with Sen. Duckworth to improve our transportation system in northeastern Illinois.”

"Now law, S. 496 repeals the overly burdensome U.S. DOT ruling on ‘Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordination and Planning Area Reform,’ and ensures that CMAP and our neighboring MPOs in northwest Indiana and southwestern Wisconsin can maintain the integrity of our regional planning processes,” added CMAP Executive Director Joseph C. Szabo. “We look forward to continuing our transportation and land use planning as the Chicago region’s MPO, while coordinating closely with our neighbors. We are thankful to Senator Duckworth, Representative Lipinski, and the Illinois congressional delegation for their bi-partisan leadership on the passage of this law.”

Since arriving in the Senate, Duckworth has highlighted the problems with the now repealed DOT rule. She questioned U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao during her confirmation hearing before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee about how the rule would disrupt important transportation projects, video of which available [here](#). She also discussed the need to repeal the misguided MPO rule with elected leaders and transportation officials at several events across Illinois, including at roundtable discussions in [Chicago](#) and [Quincy](#), and at the [groundbreaking](#) of a new rail car facility in Chicago.

The DOT rule that Duckworth's bipartisan legislation would repeal, called the "MPO Coordination and Planning Area Reform" rule, was finalized in December 2016, despite widespread opposition from transportation stakeholders throughout the country. It required certain MPOs to merge with their counterparts in other states if they are designated by the U.S. Census Bureau as sharing an urban area. If it had been allowed to go forward, the rule would have forced Illinois's 16 MPOs to merge with MPOs in Wisconsin and Indiana, and empowered the Governors of Wisconsin and Indiana to potentially block critical transportation improvement projects in Illinois. The DOT estimated that rescinding the MPO rule will save taxpayers an estimated \$86.3 million annually, which translates into savings of \$431.5 million over 5 years, and \$863 million over 10 years.

Senator Duckworth's bipartisan legislation, which passed Congress in record time, was endorsed by the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).