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## Senate votes to override President's WRDA veto

By Sara Wyant, Agri-Pulse Editor

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By a 79-14 margin, the U.S. Senate voted Thursday to override President Bush's veto of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which authorizes \$23 billion to modernize the nation's locks and dams, assist with flood protection efforts and restore key environmental areas. The Senate's action followed a House vote to override on Nov. 6, which passed 361-54.

President Bush has only vetoed five bills since taking office, but this is the first one to be overridden. Only 12 Republicans voted against the measure, along with two Democrats, **Senators Russ Feingold of Wisconsin and Claire McCaskill of Missouri.**

The override votes were widely applauded by a wide variety of farm organization and agribusiness leaders who have been pushing for Congressional passage during most of this decade.

**"Soybean growers appreciate the persistence of the Senate and House because the Water Resources Development Act is key to soybean sales,"** said American Soybean Association (ASA) President John Hoffman, a soybean grower from Waterloo, IA. "U.S. waterways are the most economical and environmentally friendly way to move U.S. soybeans to domestic and foreign markets."

"When it comes to this issue, nothing has been easy," added National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) President Ron Litterer. "After almost two decades of work by corn growers, millions of dollars spent on studies, seven years of waiting on the legislative process, a presidential veto and then a veto override by the U.S. Congress, **we finally have achieved authorization to modernize seven locks on the Upper Mississippi River System.**

Representatives of major crop input suppliers also expressed their appreciation.

**"The fertilizer industry relies heavily on the inland waterways transportation infrastructure to move our products to farmer's fields,"** said The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) President Ford West. "We are pleased with Congress for its determination to authorize and address the many needs of our industry and others."

Lawmakers argued that the investments under WRDA will be crucial to enhancing the competitiveness of U.S. agriculture.

“I’ve seen the investment that Brazil is putting into its infrastructure on the Amazon River,” said Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA). **“We’re learning that unless we update the infrastructure on our own rivers, we’re going to see higher and higher input costs and fewer and fewer markets for our commodities.”**

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