

Land Trust Alliance
Federal Policy Update
2/24/2026

Funding the federal government

On February 3 the President signed a package of funding bills into law to fund the remaining parts of the federal government through the end of the fiscal year – September 30, 2026. The one exception is the Department of Homeland Security, which was funded through February 13, 2026, to provide time for negotiations to address concerns with Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Patrol actions. Congress was not able to reach agreement prior to February 13, and parts of DHS are in a government shutdown until an agreement can be reached. It is unclear how long the partial government shutdown will last.

The bill to provide funding for the Department of Interior and related agencies was signed into law in January. There is good news in the Interior appropriations bill as it funds conservation programs and agencies at significantly higher levels than the President’s budget request. It fully funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million, includes an FY2025 project list and requires the Department of the Interior to send a list of FY2026 projects to Congress. It is our understanding that to date the Administration has not yet provided the FY2026 project list. The package also funded staff capacity.

As a reminder, the Department of Agriculture was funded last year as part of another minibus funding package. The 2018 Farm Bill was extended through September 30, 2026, as part of the same package.

Farm Bill

House Agriculture Committee Chair, GT Thompson from Pennsylvania, plans to mark up the next Farm Bill in committee the week of March 1. The Committee released text of the bill on February 13 and as expected, it reflects the vast majority of the Alliance’s Farm Bill recommendations including further streamlining implementation of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, allowing up to ten percent of RCPP project costs to be used for eligible partner administrative expenses and establishing the Forest Conservation Easement Program with mandatory funding.

As a reminder, the reconciliation bill that was signed into law last July secured the remaining Inflation Reduction Act funding and increased baseline funding for the Farm Bill conservation title by about 20-25%. That includes an increase in funding for ACEP from \$450 million/year to \$625 million in FY2026 and growing to \$700 million/year in FY2029. It also increased funding for RCPP from \$300 million/year to \$425 million in FY2026 which increases to \$450 million/year starting in FY2027. These programs as well as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program are authorized through FY2031.

Efforts to streamline permitting

The Alliance continues to monitor efforts in Congress to streamline the permitting process for the siting of infrastructure and the development of energy and mineral resources. The House passed two bills in December, which are now waiting for action in Senate:

- The Permit Efficient Review for Modern Infrastructure Today (PERMIT) Act, H.R. 3898, passed the House on Dec. 11 on a [221-205](#) vote. The legislation would expedite federal permitting processes including the Clean Water Act and limit state authority to review federal permits and to impose additional restrictions.
- The Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act, H.R. 4776, passed the House on Dec. 18 on a [221-196](#) vote. The legislation would shorten timelines for the National Environmental Policy Act as well as limit judicial review.

Second reconciliation bill

On January 13, Republicans released the framework for a second reconciliation bill. One of the pillars of the framework focuses on codifying the President's Executive Orders to streamline the siting of energy infrastructure.

In addition, it calls for incorporating provisions from the Regulation from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny (REINS) Act (), which would prohibit the imposition of economically significant rules and regulations that have not been preemptively approved by Congress. A similar proposal was rejected by the parliamentarian in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act debate.

If the bill starts to move forward, the Alliance will watch out for harmful provisions that we kept out of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act including anti-conservation easement language and language that would undermine non-profits.

Republican leadership have not yet endorsed the framework so the path forward is unclear, however, we will stay on top of it in case it starts to get traction.

Threats to conservation easements

The Alliance continues to watch for attacks on conservation easements and voluntary private land conservation. In December we worked with Alliance members and partners to successfully defeat harmful model legislation under consideration by the American Legislative Exchange Council. While this was a victory to celebrate, it was by a very narrow vote, and it is likely anti-easement model legislation will come up again this year as ALEC gears up for the 2027 legislative session.

We were also successful in keeping harmful language that would have allowed the buyback of Department of the Interior easements out of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act that was signed into law last July.

We are monitoring what is going on in the states – but we need your help. Please let us know if bills to undermine easements pop up during the commonwealth's current legislative session. We also want to know about any good bills.

Executive Branch

President Trump continues to issue executive orders and actions at an unprecedented pace, and we continue to keep our website up to date with information that is relevant to our community.

On January 8, the Council on Environmental Quality issued a final rule to remove all iterations of CEQ's regulations to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 from the Code of Federal Regulations. This was another step in implementing E.O. 14154, Unleashing American Energy which was issued on January 20, 2025, and means each agency needs to adopt NEPA rules, which could mean less consistency across the federal government.

Over the last year, federal agencies including the Departments of Interior, Energy and Agriculture issued interim final rules to implement the executive order including streamlined agency NEPA regulations. This week the Department of the Interior issued its [final NEPA rule](#), which according to an Interior spokesperson rescinds more than 80% of the department's NEPA regulations.

New USDA general terms and conditions

On December 31, 2025, USDA Secretary Rollins issued new [General Terms and Conditions](#) for significant modifications to existing awards and for all future awards. The new terms and conditions cover all grants, cooperative agreements, other agreements including mutual agreements. Among other things, USDA awards may not fund activities that support climate change or environmental justice initiatives or initiatives that support diversity, equity and inclusion. Deviations from GT&Cs will be handled on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by the OCFO.

If you have or plan to have a grant or agreement with the USDA, we recommend land trusts work with their legal counsel to understand the terms and conditions as it relates to their organizations.

USDA reorganization

We are tracking reports about the U.S. Department of Agriculture reorganization which includes closing several offices in the Washington, DC metro area and relocating staff to "hubs" in Fort Collins, CO; Indianapolis, IN; Kansas City, MO; Raleigh, NC; and Salt Lake City, UT.

Senior department officials stated publicly the intent to move forward with relocating staff this summer once school ends. Our primary concern with the relocations is the potential for more staff to leave the agency at a time when they have already lost a significant part of the workforce.

Land Trust Alliance 2026 Advocacy Days

Join us for Advocacy Days 2026 which will be held April 13 – 16 in Washington D.C.

We are holding a virtual session on March 31 from 1:30 – 4:30 to review the issues we are covering this year and provide a first timers training.

We need your voice to underscore the importance of the work you do and why the programs that support that work are a wise investment.

You can find additional information and register [here](#).

Call to Action: The land trust community needs to educate decision makers at all levels of government about the work that you do and why the programs and tools that help advance this work are a good investment. That includes conservation easements and all the benefits of the work including helping families.