

Land Trust Alliance
Federal Policy Update for MLTC
9/25/2026

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

OMB proposed regulation for federal financial assistance

The public comment period for the Office of Management and Budget's proposed Financial Assistance Regulation closed on July 13. Nearly half a million comments were submitted with the vast majority expressing opposition to the proposed rule.

The proposed regulation would revise the Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance "to improve government-wide policies and requirements related to the management of grants, cooperative agreements and other forms of assistance...to improve transparency, accountability and oversight for Federal awards across the Federal Government." The proposed regulation is another step in the Administration's effort to update general terms and conditions for all federal assistance and would cover the vast majority of the federal government.

While OMB had hoped to issue the final regulation by October 1, both the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives took a major step to block the rule from taking effect. As part of a Continuing Resolution (see details below) that passed the Senate on August 8 and the House on September 1, language was included in the CR that blocks the OMB rule from taking effect through December 11.

Call to action: Urge the Massachusetts delegation to block the OMB rule permanently.

Proposed changes to SAM.gov

Our June report noted the General Services Administration had proposed changes that would update the Financial Assistance General Representations and Certifications for SAM.gov in order to align with updated executive branch guidance. As of today, the GSA has not yet issued a final rule.

If your land trust receives federal funding from any federal agency, we urge you to review any new certifications and their associated terms and conditions very carefully and consult with your legal counsel regarding requirements for compliance. In addition, you can stay on top of all federal actions that impact our community by visiting our [Current Federal Landscape](#) website.

IRS announces Office of Conservation Easements

On August 19, the IRS announced the establishment of an Office of Conservation Easements. According to the service, "the Office will centralize technical expertise and coordinate policy, enforcement, and case-resolution strategy across the IRS and with the Office of Chief Counsel."

As part of the announcement, the service also stated that they will be concluding the current settlement opportunity for individuals who engaged in abusive syndicated conservation transactions prior to the Charitable Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act becoming law. More information about the new office, which will be headed by former legal advisor to President Trump, Dan Huff, can be [found here](#).

NRCS

\$650 million available for working lands conservation

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is accepting fiscal year 2027 applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program through December 18. If your land trust is interested in applying but does not know where to start the [Land Trust Alliance's NRCS Conservation Acquisition Team](#) can help with navigating the application process. Email ncat@lta.org to request assistance.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program NOFO

In August, the U.S. Forest Service announced a notice of funding opportunity for the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program. The competitive grant program provides financial assistance to tribal entities, local governments and qualified conservation non-profit organizations to acquire and establish community forests that provide community benefits. Land trusts can request up to \$600,000 per project with applications due October 13. To learn more, [click here](#).

CONGRESS

FY2027 funding process

As of today, all 12 House appropriations bills have advanced out of the House Appropriations Committee, with three appropriations bills — Agriculture; Military; and State, Foreign Operations — passing the full House. Over in the Senate, appropriations leaders continue to reconcile disagreements over top-line spending allocations and as of today none of the funding measures have cleared the Senate Appropriations Committee. Despite the impasse, the government remains funded at current levels.

On September 1, the House of Representatives passed a continuing resolution to fund the federal government through December 11. The measure passed on a bipartisan [370-48](#) vote. The Senate had previously passed the measure in August on a [90-6](#) bipartisan vote. Not only does the continuing resolution fund the federal government past the midterms but also, as noted above, blocks implementation of the proposed OMB financial assistance regulation through December 11.

The latest on passing a new Farm Bill

On September 16, Senate Agriculture Chair John Boozman, R-Ark., reconvened the committee to mark up the Farm Bill after the bill failed during a hearing back in August. This time around the legislation passed by a 12-11 partisan vote.

In August, rules had prevented a proxy vote for Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., from being counted, and Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., was not present for the vote. However, both were present at the reconvened September hearing and both voted in favor of advancing the legislation.

The Farm Bill still faces a difficult path as Democrats and Republicans still have major disagreements over SNAP provisions to shift costs to states included in 2025's One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Democrats are calling for a two-year delay of the cost shift while Republicans offered a one-year delay. Reaching an agreement will ultimately impact whether or not a Farm Bill will pass this year.

In addition, some organizations are continuing to push a false narrative that the Farm Bill Conservation Title will be weakened if funds are redistributed from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program to fund the Forest Conservation Easement Program and other important programs. We must set the record straight.

Call to action: Reach out to Senators Markey and Warren and urge them to support the Forest Conservation Easement Program with mandatory funding and preserve the proposed Conservation Title allocations as written. Urge them to pass a Farm Bill this year!

Data center bills advance in House

On September 16, the House passed the Ratepayer Protection Act, H.R. 9340, on [417-3 bipartisan vote](#). The legislation would require states to consider adopting “a Federal standard relating to the recovery of the full, incremental costs of upgrades that serve data centers.” The bill had previously advanced out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee in late July on a 52-0 bipartisan vote. On September 17, Senator Heinrich from New Mexico blocked an effort to pass the bill by unanimous consent in the Senate over concerns that the bill lacks “real teeth.” It’s unclear at this time if Leader Thune will bring the bill to the floor for a roll call vote before the Senate recesses at the end of September.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee also approved a series of other bills in late July aimed at lower energy costs and cutting red tape. The Protecting Families from AI Data Center Energy Costs Act advanced on a 44-0 vote, which would require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to hold a conference with major stakeholders on how to protect residents from increased costs. The committee also passed the Load Forecasting Enhancement Act, H.R. 9332, by a vote of 47-0, which would require FERC to study electricity demand forecasting as a means of predicting how data centers could increase future electricity needs. These bills are now awaiting a full House vote.