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Whitehouse, Alexander, Rounds, Booker Introduce IMAGINE Act to Spur Use of Innovative Materials in Rebuilding American Infrastructure

Troubled infrastructure to get boost from research and investments in innovative materials

Washington, DC – Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Mike Rounds (R-SD), and Cory Booker (D-NJ) have introduced the Innovative Materials for America’s Growth and Infrastructure Newly Expanded (IMAGINE) Act, to encourage research and deployment of innovative construction materials in transportation and water infrastructure projects nationwide. Investing in these new techniques and materials would help to extend the life of critical public works that draw increasingly poor ratings for condition and performance.

The bill would take a number of steps to promote the use of advanced infrastructure materials. It would create a task force to examine standards and methods used to assess the federal government’s approval of materials for infrastructure projects. It would promote research into new materials and building techniques. And it would spur federal investment in vital bridge and water infrastructure projects that utilize innovative materials, prioritizing coastal and rural projects.

“American innovators have come up with materials with the potential to make our roads, bridges, water systems, and other important infrastructure far more resilient and safe. Using these materials in our public works will pay off big for the communities that rely on them and for the American taxpayer,” **said Whitehouse**, who has worked closely with Rhode Island’s vibrant composites manufacturing industry to explore the range of applications for advanced materials in America’s infrastructure. “I’m proud to join Senators Alexander, Rounds, and Booker to help drive investment in the next generation of materials to rebuild our nation’s infrastructure.”

“When I was governor, I proposed and Tennessee enacted three road programs, and our state’s highway system is now one of the best in the country. Good roads and zero road debt have helped attract manufacturing jobs and raise family incomes,” **said Alexander**. “Research universities and national laboratories are our country’s ‘secret weapons’ — and this bill will help them develop new materials to improve our nation’s roads and bridges so we can continue to create more good paying jobs.”

“I strongly support investing in material research and the use of new technologies that can be used to improve our critical infrastructure,” **said Rounds**. “As we continue to work toward a long-term infrastructure plan that enhances public safety, creates jobs and strengthens our

economy, our bill will help pave the way for a stronger, safer and more cost effective infrastructure system.”

The IMAGINE Act would encourage the development of materials such as high performance asphalt mixtures and concrete formulations, geo-synthetic materials, advanced alloys and metals, reinforced polymer composites, aggregate materials, and advanced polymers.

A section-by-section summary of the bill is available [here](#).

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A range of stakeholders from innovative materials industries cheered introduction of the bill. The American Chemistry Council, the **American Coatings Association**, the **American Composites Manufacturers Association**, the **Geosynthetic Materials Association**, **LafargeHolcim**, the **National Asphalt Pavement Association**, the **Owens Corning Plastics Industry Association**, and the **Vinyl Institute** welcomed introduction of the bill in a [letter to the senators sent this](#) week.

“For years, we have encouraged Congress to think outside the box to develop infrastructure legislation that incentivizes the increased use of innovative materials,” **said Tom Dobbins, President of the American Composites Manufacturers Association**. “The IMAGINE Act does exactly that, and our allies in Congress understand the urgency of this issue and will fight to ensure the bill passes.”

“There’s no question that our nation’s infrastructure is in desperate need of modernization and that it will take a strong commitment to innovation and investment to tackle this growing problem,” **said Cal Dooley, President and CEO of the American Chemistry Council**. “We commend Senator Whitehouse for his leadership on this important issue, along with Senator Alexander and Congresswomen Comstock and Esty for working to develop bipartisan legislative solutions. The IMAGINE Act would help drive investment and research in cutting edge building technologies critical to strengthening America’s infrastructure. It’s the products and solutions provided by the U.S. business of chemistry that will make many of these innovative construction materials and techniques possible. We urge Congress to move this sensible legislation forward to help restore our outdated infrastructure and help communities across the country.”

“The United States has historically been at the forefront of development and implementation of innovative materials used in road construction. The IMAGINE Act is critically important legislation that will continue to advance our nation’s infrastructure system and encourage the development of innovative techniques and materials,” **said John Henderson, President of TenCate Geosynthetics and a member of the Geosynthetic Materials Association Executive Council**. “I want to thank Senator Whitehouse for his leadership in advocating for real solutions that will sustain our nation’s economy.”

“Federally-led research has led to the deployment of longer-lasting, sustainable, and cost-effective pavement materials being deployed across the country,” **said Craig Parker, National Asphalt Pavement Association Chairman and Executive Vice President of Silver Star**

Construction Co., Inc. “This research has led to great advances in both the materials and construction techniques being used in America’s highway pavements. Federally funded research has the effect of bringing various stakeholders together to imagine the possibilities and develop useful, practical technologies that can be deployed in the field. While great strides have been made in developing pavement technologies that increase the use of recycled asphalt pavements and deploying warm-mix asphalt, the IMAGINE Act will lead the way in developing the next generation of pavements that will be even more safe, more sustainable and more economical. This is an important topic that Congress is finally addressing under the leadership of Senator Whitehouse and others and should be supported by all members of Congress.”

One provision of the bill would call on the Transportation Secretary to form innovative material hubs throughout the country to continue to drive research into and development of innovative materials for use in infrastructure projects. The provision was inspired by the success of communities of materials manufacturers – like advanced composites makers in Rhode Island and the Institute for Advanced Composites Manufacturing Innovation in Knoxville, Tennessee – that have leveraged their innovations and expertise to grow their industry.

Representatives Elizabeth Esty (D-CT), David Cicilline (D-RI), and Barbara Comstock (R-VA) will introduced companion legislation in the House on Friday.