

I voted Yes on H.R. 2842, the Bureau of Reclamation Small Conduit Hydropower Development and Rural Jobs Act.

This bill would authorize the Bureau of Reclamation to permit private entities to develop small hydropower units on irrigation canals and conduits under the jurisdiction of this federal agency. H.R. 2842 would retain National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations on larger installations, while exempting very small conduit hydropower (1.5 megawatts or less) from this often burdensome and duplicative review. These units would be installed and operated on man-made canals that have already gone through federal environmental review.

Currently, jurisdiction over hydropower development at such facilities is split between the Bureau of Reclamation of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). This bill reduces uncertainty over which federal agency manages hydropower development at Reclamation's facilities, by clarifying that the jurisdiction for small hydropower development on all bureau irrigation canals and conduits lies solely with Reclamation. By clearing up this multi-agency confusion, we will have a simplified, quicker, and more cost-effective process that maintains the integrity of environmental reviews.

Hydropower is the leading clean energy source of power in our country, accounting for almost 75% of the nation's total renewable electricity generation. At a time when energy prices continue to rise, it is critical that we look to expand our domestic energy production in a safe and cost-effective manner, and hydropower is the one of the cheapest and cleanest sources of electricity at our disposal. This legislation works to cut down on regulatory barriers and reduce administrative costs for small hydropower development, allowing our country to continue down a path towards energy independence.

This bill passed the House by a vote of 265 – 154.