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Association Press Congress for Bipartisan Infrastructure Revamp.

A day after President Trump called for improvements to the nation's infrastructure in his State of the Union address this week, a coalition of more than 150 associations appealed to Congress for a bipartisan infrastructure bill, noting wide support for such a measure.

Even in an era of divided government, common ground can be reached on some of the nation's priorities—in particular, a wide range of needed infrastructure improvements, a coalition of associations told congressional leaders in a letter this week.

More than 150 organizations signed on to the letter, calling for a "bipartisan, comprehensive package that transforms U.S. infrastructure systems beyond the status quo and maintains U.S. competitiveness in a 21st-century economy." The Infrastructure Working Group, led by the National Association of Manufacturers and the Associated General Contractors of America, warned that a failure to invest risks increasing an already present "infrastructure deficit."

"As this challenge persists and worsens, we encourage you to develop and advance a bipartisan infrastructure investment package that will improve the safety, reliability and efficiency of our nation's infrastructure," the coalition said in the letter [PDF].

Other groups signing the letter included the American Beverage Association, the American Society of Civil Engineers, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National League of Cities, and the U.S. Travel Association.

The group called for legislation to address six specific needs: an increase in direct federal infrastructure investment; a remedy for shortages in existing funds; stronger financial tools used for infrastructure investment, such as municipal bonds; more opportunities for private investment in infrastructure projects; an easier federal permitting process; and greater collaboration among all levels of government and between the public and private sector.

In a post on NAM's Shopfloor website, Robyn Boerstling, the association's vice president of infrastructure, innovation, and human resources policy, noted that all sides understand the need for action.

"Manufacturers, Congress, and the president all agree the failure to upgrade U.S. infrastructure threatens U.S. economic competitiveness," she wrote. "Now is the time for the business community, labor organizations, Republicans, and Democrats to work together to pass an infrastructure bill."

It's widely perceived that 2019 offers the best opportunity to pass infrastructure legislation during the current administration—though it faces many hurdles—and it was a key point in President Trump's State of the Union address this week, though his speech was light on details.

ASSOCIATIONS NOW

BY ERNIE SMITH / FEB 8, 2019

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