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14 Jul 2016 | USA | Government & Policy

Eugene Gilligan

Senators propose public building PAB bill

US Senators proposed a bill to make private activity bonds (PABs) available for social infrastructure projects on 13 July.



The bill, the Public Buildings Renewal Act (S3177), is co-sponsored by Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Bill Nelson (D-FL). It is the Senate version of legislation (HR 5361) introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Michael Kelly (R-Pa) on 26 May.

The legislation would create USD 5bn in PABs for public buildings, such as public schools, state colleges, libraries, post offices, prisons and courthouses.

“The use of P3s has yielded enormous dividends across the nation in the form of transportation and infrastructure improvements,” Heller said in a statement. “I want to see the same results closer to home, through overhauling our public buildings in the Silver State, especially those serving as pillars of education.”

Nelson and Heller introduced the bill to the Senate Finance Committee, of which they are both members.

Speaking to *InfraAmericas*, Samara Barend, senior vice president and P3 development director for AECOM, and founder of the Performance Based Buildings Coalition (PBBC), said the co-sponsors were notable. Nelson is from Florida, which Barend described as the state most active in P3s across multiple sectors.

Heller’s home state, Nevada, requires approximately USD 6bn worth of upgrades to its schools, and Governor Brian Sandoval supports the bill, she said.

Bill attachment

Backers of the bill support attaching it to larger bills to be reviewed in both chambers before the end of the year, Barend said. Lawmakers are more likely to support a piece of legislation that has been introduced in both legislative chambers, she added.

The House bill now has nine co-sponsors - five Democratic and four Republican - seven of which sit on the House Ways and Means Committee, where this bill was referred.

Despite Congress departing for its summer recess on 15 July, Barend said the PBBC and other bill advocates would work to gain additional sponsors.

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