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Suit Filed To Restore Critical Infrastructure and Investment Funds

Today, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, National Council of Nonprofits, Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District and Green Infrastructure Center filed a [lawsuit](#) challenging the Trump administration’s unlawful freeze on funding from the congressionally-approved Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), known also as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law—critical investments that help communities combat climate change, improve infrastructure, and protect public health.

The freeze, ordered through President Trump’s “Unleashing American Energy” executive order and implemented by the Office of Management and Budget, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, and the Interior, has left vital community projects in limbo—hurting public lands, clean energy initiatives, local economies and communities.

“We were quite thrilled when we signed a contract for federal funding to enhance our Greenway with a huge urban forestry project that will benefit the 50,000 people and the incredible wildlife that who live within a 10-minute walk of the places we planned to improve,” said **Alicia J. Lehrer, Executive Director of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC)**. “New full-time employees, local residents and partner organizations would help bring together

hundreds of people to learn about the project and become stewards. The federal funding freeze of the IRA funds intended for the project is affecting not only jobs, but workforce training, youth learning and quality of life improvements for all the people we serve and the natural resources we work to improve and protect where they are needed most – in our urban landscapes.”

“The Trump Administration is again unlawfully withholding funding for nonprofit organizations to do essential work in communities throughout the country. These congressionally appropriated funds could reduce lead in school and daycare water fountains, weatherize the homes of low-income Americans to lower their utility bills, maintain green spaces in disadvantaged areas, and reduce the risk of wildfires through land management. Freezing these funds will harm many and benefit no one. NCN will continue standing up for the vital work of nonprofit organizations, and for the people and communities they serve,” said **Diane Yentel, President & CEO of the National Council of Nonprofits.**

“The Trump administration’s freeze on funds awarded lawfully by Congress puts our employees’ jobs at risk, prevents us from purchasing thousands of trees from local growers, stops us from creating new park spaces and rips away support to cities and towns who cannot otherwise afford this work,” said **Karen Firehock, Executive Director of the Green Infrastructure Center.** “This hold on congressionally awarded funds is not only illegal; it is a breach of trust from the United States Government. The \$1.5 billion from Congress is a great leveraging investment in our country, The urban forestry sector not only contributes directly to the US economy—employing more than 500,000 people and adding \$37 billion annually—but the multiplier effect from all the additional benefits and products has been estimated by Arbor Day Foundation at \$61.9 billion annually. We’re asking the U.S. Government to honor their commitment to us and all the nonprofit organizations that make America healthy again.”

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island by Democracy Forward and co-counsel DeLuca, Weizenbaum, Barry & Revens, challenges the administration’s arbitrary and capricious decision to suspend billions in funding in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act.

“Across the country, congressionally-approved infrastructure resources are being held up by this lawless Administration. The decision to freeze funds that Congress appropriated is yet another attempt to roll back progress and undermine

communities. These actions are not only unlawful, but are already having an impact on local economies,” **said Skye Perryman, President and CEO of Democracy Forward.** “This administration is literally taking money away from the communities who have been waiting for needed infrastructure improvement. We are fighting back on behalf of the nonprofit organizations and communities that rely on these critical investments to improve public health, create jobs, and protect our environment. The law is clear: these funds must be released, and we will hold this administration accountable in court.”

“Congress voted to support the work of nonprofits like the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council. Our Constitution gives our representatives and senators, and not the executive, the authority to do exactly that job,” said **Miriam Weizenbaum of DeLuca, Weizenbaum, Barry & Revens.** “Our firm is proud to represent nonprofits who are standing up for what was written in our Constitution over 200 years ago, to protect all those who rely on the critical work of federally funded nonprofits.”

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About the National Council of Nonprofits

Communities thrive when nonprofits succeed. For more than 30 years, the National Council of Nonprofits (NCN) has mobilized the largest network of nonprofits in the United States to achieve transformative results. We champion, connect, and inform nonprofits across the country. Join our collective efforts to ensure a connected and powerful nonprofit community equipped to champion the public good.