

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommendation provides \$187,800,000 for the pipeline safety account to continue pipeline safety operations, research and development, and grants. Of the total funds provided, \$29,000,000 is from the oil spill liability trust fund, \$151,400,000 is from the pipeline safety fund, \$400,000 is from the liquefied natural gas siting account within the pipeline safety fund, and \$7,000,000 is from the underground natural gas storage facility safety account within the pipeline safety fund. The following table provides funding levels for activities within this account.

	Request	Recommendation
Research and development	\$15,000,000	\$12,500,000
State pipeline safety grants	58,000,000	60,500,000
Underground natural gas storage facility safety grants	5,000,000	5,000,000
One-call state grants	1,058,000	1,058,000
State damage prevention grants	1,500,000	1,500,000

Research and development.—Between 2002 and 2021, the PHMSA reported 12,793 pipeline incidents, which resulted in 276 deaths, 1,144 injuries, and \$10,130,468,788 in reported damages. Over this 20-year time frame an average of 640 incidents occurred each year. Pipeline research and development plays a vital role in improving pipeline safety, reducing the environmental impacts of pipeline failures, and increasing the reliability of the nation's pipeline system through advancing new, near-term solutions. While the Committee supports the PHMSA's pipeline research and development program and appreciates the increased level of detail provided by the PHMSA on these activities in the fiscal year 2023 budget justification, the Committee remains concerned with the lack of clarity and transparency of the PHMSA's research and development program and priorities. The most recently available Pipeline Safety Research and Development Five-Year Program Plan was issued in October 2017 and covers fiscal years 2016 to 2020, and the Committee notes with disappointment that the PHMSA has not submitted an updated research plan to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations as required by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116–260). Until the PHMSA completes an updated research plan to provide the Committee with greater transparency and understanding of the PHMSA's research plans, objectives, and priorities, the PHMSA shall only use the \$12,500,000 in pipeline research and development provided under this heading for projects which further the six programmatic elements in the Pipeline Safety Research and Development Five-Year Program Plan issued in October 2017, which includes threat prevention; leak detection; anomaly detection and characterization; anomaly remediation and repair; design, materials, and welding/joining; and LNG and underground natural gas storage. In addition, the Committee continues to direct the PHMSA to use the pipeline research and development unobligated balances from fiscal years 2020, 2021, and 2022 to advance these same six programmatic elements. The Committee notes that this direction does not preclude the PHMSA from supporting university and small business research projects advancing these six programmatic elements through the competitive academic agreement program

and the small business innovative research program. Further, the Committee directs the PHMSA to brief the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations on the updated research plan no later than 30 days after its completion.

Aboveground storage tanks.—The PHMSA has jurisdiction over more than 8,400 aboveground storage tanks, and is responsible for ensuring that pipeline operators design, construct, operate, and maintain pipeline facilities, including aboveground storage tanks, according to Federal regulations. The PHMSA completed a review of current and new corrosion control techniques of aboveground storage tanks and issued a report on January 12, 2022, as required by Public Law 116–260. The report reinforced that a major threat to the integrity of aboveground storage tanks is corrosion of the bottom of the tank, which could lead to a leak and could pose significant risks to the public, environment, and property. Federal regulations currently require the use of corrosion protection systems for all newly constructed or modified aboveground storage tanks. The report notes that while currently required corrosion protection systems remain effective, pipeline operators would benefit from using additional corrosion control systems in lieu of or in conjunction with the currently required corrosion protection systems to protect the bottom of aboveground storage tanks. While the PHMSA has supported corrosion prevention and mitigation research projects through its pipeline research and development program, the report indicates that some of the proven concepts could be further explored through additional research to determine the effectiveness of preventing corrosion on the bottom of aboveground storage tanks. On March 31, 2022, the PHMSA issued a research announcement soliciting applications for research projects across several different topics, including preventing corrosion on the bottom of aboveground storage tanks. The Committee notes that such research could fall within the programmatic elements in the Pipeline Safety Research and Development Five-Year Program Plan issued in October 2017. The Committee encourages the PHMSA to continue to advance corrosion prevention and mitigation research projects from amounts provided for pipeline research and development under this heading. Further, the Committee directs the PHMSA to brief the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations on its plans for the fiscal year 2023 pipeline research and development funding no later than 90 days after enactment of this Act.

Staffing and hiring plans.—The Committee recommendation provides funding for a total of 355 full-time positions to support the Office of Pipeline Safety, which consists of 247 inspection and enforcement staff, including the 29 additional inspection and enforcement staff that were mandated by the PIPES Act of 2020 (division R of P.L. 116–260), and 108 safety professionals, including the eight additional regulatory positions that were mandated by the same Act. The Committee remains concerned with the PHMSA’s ability to fill vacancies and retain staff due in part to competition from the private sector. The PIPES Act of 2020 directed the PHMSA to use incentives, such as special pay rates, student loan repayment, tuition assistance, and other recruitment incentives, to recruit and retain a qualified pipeline workforce, including inspection and enforcement staff and attorneys and other subject matter