

**Paving the Way for Rural Communities Act of 2019 (S.2430)**  
*Introduced by U.S. Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.)*  
*with U.S. Senators Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) and David Perdue (R-Ga.)*

**Background:**

Rural communities in counties outside Metropolitan Statistical Areas are among the most in need of federal assistance for economic development.

Federal laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), add enormous cost and complexity to local communities trying to work with federal departments and agencies on highway construction or economic development projects. These laws sometimes hinder private entities from investing in rural communities.

**The Problem:**

The costs of hiring consultants and attorneys to ensure compliance can add significant costs and complexity to communities already lacking financial and informational resources.

This puts rural counties at a disadvantage compared to their urban counterparts because they generally lack a sufficient tax base to hire the consultants, attorneys, and subject matter experts necessary to document compliance with NEPA, NHPA, and ESA.

In some cases, these regulations deter smaller communities from participating in federal programs altogether.

**The Solution:**

Remove ESA, NHPA, and NEPA requirements from federal funded projects or activities in any area that is not part of a metropolitan statistical area as designated by the OMB.

Removing these outdated, burdensome regulatory hurdles will increase rural communities' access to better economic opportunities and timely and efficient infrastructure projects.

**The Paving the Way for Rural Communities Act of 2019:**

- Exempts federally funded projects in any areas that are not part of a metropolitan statistical area from NEPA, ESA, and NHPA.