

Waterfront Community Revitalization and Resiliency Act of 2024

Introduced by Senator Baldwin

The bill would support local efforts to revitalize waterfronts along the Great Lakes and ocean coastal communities to promote economic, ecosystem and community resiliency

The Need: Many waterfront communities were built decades ago and are now working to invest in their infrastructure to overcome structural problems, such as limited public access and poor alignment with modern development. In addition to adapting to economic shifts, waterfront communities are facing pressures to make investments in coastal infrastructure that can withstand weather extremes like storms, floods, and fluctuating water levels; and adapt to changing ecosystem conditions that range from shoreline erosion, to harmful algal blooms, to stressors on fisheries.

Waterfront planning and implementation requires communities to navigate intergovernmental hurdles, work across constituent groups and agencies, and secure financing. But many communities lack the resources to make it from vision to reality—despite the major economic returns from revitalizing waterfront communities and the payoff that building resilient coastal infrastructure can provide in the long term.

The Solution: The Waterfront Community Revitalization and Resiliency Act of 2024 will support community efforts to make the most of water resources by attracting water-dependent industries and investments that leverage water sustainably, revitalize neighborhoods, and allow for recreation and tourism. The bill will support communities in planning for their future and help attract private and non-profit investment by:

1. Creating a voluntary Resilient Waterfront Community designation within the Department of Commerce at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The designation recognizes communities that adopt and implement a resilient waterfront community plan integrating economic, ecosystem, & infrastructure challenges and opportunities.
2. Establishing a Resilient Waterfront Communities Network for the sharing of best practices, highlighting Resilient Waterfront Communities, and attracting tourism and new investment opportunities.
3. Creating a Grant Program for providing funding to develop and implement a Resilient Waterfront Community plan. Grants could be used to advance various projects, such as:
 - Improving waterfront access;
 - Acquiring easements for public amenities; and
 - Making infrastructure upgrades that improve coastal resiliency.

Endorsements: American Society of Landscape Architects, National Association of Realtors, Association of Marina Industries, National League of Cities, Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, Wisconsin Towns Association, Wisconsin Counties Association, Clean Wisconsin, Alliance for the Great Lakes, American Planning Association – Wisconsin, Wisconsin League of Municipalities, Gathering Waters, Milwaukee Riverkeeper, Green Bay Mayor Eric Genrich, Oconto Mayor John Panetti, Sheboygan Mayor Ryan Sorenson, Racine Mayor Cory Mason, Manitowoc Mayor Justin

Nickels, Marinette Mayor Steve Genisot, Kenosha Mayor David Bogdala, Ashland Mayor Matthew MacKenzie, Superior Mayor Jim Paine