

Approximately 35,000 special districts are local governments providing critical infrastructure and essential services in thousands of communities across the country. They exist when a community demands a service that another unit of government is not otherwise providing. These agencies are established and locally governed under an enabling act or special act of a state to provide a limited and specific set of public services.

The Problem

Despite the significant presence of special districts in the U.S., **Federal law lacks a consistent definition and reference to special purpose units of local government.**

As a result, special districts:

- May have difficulties directly accessing funding opportunities.
- Are commonly omitted as eligible in the definitions of “local government” for proposed legislation and laws intended to assist all local governments.
- Are mistaken for small businesses or nonprofit corporations.
- Lack official population figures, as they are not federally recognized as “geographic units of government.”

The Solution: S. 4673

The Special District Grant Accessibility Act

- Requires Federal agencies to recognize special districts as local government for the purpose of Federal financial assistance determinations.
- Codifies in Federal law a first-ever, formal definition of "special district."

“Special District” Defined

S. 4673 - The Special District Grant Accessibility Act, defines "special district" as follows:

“ The term “special district” means a **political subdivision of a State**, with specified boundaries and significant budgetary autonomy or control, created by or pursuant to the laws of the State, for the **purpose of performing limited and specific governmental or proprietary functions** that distinguish it as a significantly separate entity from the administrative governance structure of any other form of local government unit within a State. ”

Common Services Provided

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Water & Wastewater | Healthcare & Hospital | Road & Highway |
| Irrigation | Park & Recreation | Airport |
| Fire Protection | Port/Harbor/Navigation | Electricity |
| Ambulance | Library | Mosquito Control |
| Transit | Cemetery | Resource Conservation |

Quick Facts

35,000

Special District Governments

17%

All local government revenue

50 states

Connect & Engage on Solutions

NSDC is the only national organization representing and advocating for all types of special districts at the federal level.

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