



Policies and Priorities for Southwestern Pennsylvania

Southwestern Pennsylvania is uniquely positioned to help solve major national challenges by aligning energy, defense tech, AI infrastructure, robotics, nuclear, advanced manufacturing, and research commercialization into one connected regional growth platform.

With the right federal partnership on permitting, infrastructure investment, R & D, deployment pathways, market signals, and site readiness, the region can accelerate projects that are ready to deploy capital, create jobs, strengthen national competitiveness and security, and deliver measurable economic outcomes.

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The Pittsburgh region can enable the federal government to enhance defense superiority. The region has commercially proven technologies that can be adapted to defense needs, deep robotics and AI base, and a manufacturing legacy that can help move ideas from prototype to production.

To enable that effort, the federal government should:

- Expand engagement with Pittsburgh-based robotics, autonomy, AI, and advanced manufacturing companies and Department of Defense (DOD), Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), and Defense Innovation Unit (DIU)
- Create clearer procurement pathways for dual-use technologies that already have commercial validation
- Increase funding for demonstrations, pilots, field testing, and operational validation of autonomous and AI-enabled systems.
- Support regional defense innovation hubs that connect companies, universities, manufacturers, and federal customers.
- Strengthen Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR), Other Transaction Authority (OTA), and rapid acquisition pathways for companies developing defense-relevant technologies.
- Align federal workforce, manufacturing, and technology programs to help companies scale from prototype to production.
- Use the Pittsburgh region as a national model for connecting commercial innovation to defense readiness and industrial competitiveness.

Southwestern Pennsylvania has one of the most concentrated nuclear and advanced manufacturing ecosystems in North America, bringing together globally relevant companies, assets, and related advanced nuclear manufacturing capabilities. The regional ecosystem is directly tied to energy security, grid reliability, domestic manufacturing, defense readiness, and supply-chain resilience. The region's preparedness and expansion potential of SWPA manufacturers can support expansion of domestic commercial and military nuclear power.

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To enable that opportunity, the federal government should:

- Accelerate Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) licensing and reactor approvals.
- Expand Department of Energy (DOE) support for advanced reactors, Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), supply-chain signals, and microreactors.
- Support domestic nuclear manufacturing and component production.
- Advance workforce and apprenticeship programs tied to nuclear deployment.
- Strengthen federal procurement and export support for U.S. nuclear technologies.

Southwestern Pennsylvania is emerging as a national proving ground for the next generation of energy-intensive economic development. Large projects demonstrate how former industrial and energy assets can be repositioned to support AI infrastructure, manufacturing, and grid reliability. We recognize that energy policy is economic competitiveness policy. AI leadership, manufacturing reshoring, and national security all require regions that can deliver power, land, infrastructure, workforce, and speed to market.

To capitalize on these opportunities, the federal government should:

- Prioritize permitting reform and faster federal environmental reviews.
- Emphasize Department of Energy (DOE) support for generation and transmission infrastructure.
- Advocate for Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) interconnection and transmission reforms.
- Advance federal policies that support dispatchable generation and grid modernization.
- Provide additional financing and technical assistance supports for transformational energy projects.

Southwestern Pennsylvania is home to more bridges than most other regions and averages some of the oldest infrastructure in the nation. In order for us to remain a national leader in the fields mentioned above, we must ensure our physical infrastructure is safe, well-maintained, and ready for growth.

To ensure infrastructure stability, the federal government should:

- Pass a new surface transportation bill that substantially and sustainably addresses funding needs and ensures the stability of the Highway Trust Fund to support priority projects including Bates Street (City of Pittsburgh) and the completion of Route 228 (Butler County).
- Remove the burden on smaller communities to access federal funds by converting existing discretionary funds to formula funding.
- In order to make up for prior funding shortcomings as responsibilities have grown, increase metropolitan planning (PL) funding from 1% of total formula allocations to 2.5%.

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