

Federal budget bill includes concrete study, pyrrhotite mapping

By Eric Bedner

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WASHINGTON — Two amendments aimed at addressing crumbling foundations have been included in the latest government funding package following continued advocacy by U.S. Reps. Joseph D. Courtney and John B. Larson.

The first measure would allocate \$100,000 for the U.S. Geological Survey to develop a map showing where pyrrhotite, the mineral causing foundations to deteriorate, is found throughout the country.

The second amendment, which was drafted with the assistance of U.S. Sen. Christopher S. Murphy, would require the comptroller general of the United States and regulators at the Department of the Treasury to conduct a study

examining the financial impact crumbling foundations.

The study is intended to develop regulatory and legislative recommendations needed to mitigate the impact on banks, mortgage lenders, homeowners, and tax revenue.

Larson and Courtney are praising the inclusion of the amendments in a bill to fund the federal government for the remainder of the federal fiscal year, which was approved by both chambers of Congress on Thursday.

"Congress took another important step today to help folks affected by crumbling foundations and to acknowledge this crisis on the federal level," Courtney, D-2nd District, said of the two provisions he and Larson, D-1st District, authored that were subsequently included in the spending bill.

Courtney said that while these amendments alone won't solve the foundation crisis, the unanimous support for the proposals by House members in July, and the inclusion in the funding bill, provides "strong backing" for the ongoing efforts to pool federal resources to provide assistance.

"Moving ahead, I will continue to do all that I can to explore every avenue to identify federal resources to assist homeowners and communities facing this crisis," Courtney said.

Likewise, Larson said he is grateful the proposals moved forward.

"These amendments are another important step to help homeowners affected by crumbling foundations, as well as to learn the true scope of the effects that pyrrhotite is having on buildings throughout New

England," Larson said.

The foundation issue has spread to Massachusetts due to the proximity to the now-defunct quarry at the center of the issue.

"I am proud to have teamed up with Joe Courtney to further federal involvement in this crisis," Larson said.

Similar language also found support in both chambers in January when Congress was considering legislation to end the partial government shutdown.

Courtney and Larson also wrote to the House Appropriations Committee in December, urging the adoption of both amendments in the final text of any year-end spending bill.

Murphy and Sen. Richard Blumenthal, both Democrats, ensured each proposal made it into Senate appropriations bills.

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