



Institute *for*
Responsive
Government

Sine Die 2026 Recap:

**GOVERNMENT
THAT
DELIVERS**

As state legislatures across the country adjourned sine die this year, a trend became clear: Lawmakers advanced practical reforms to make government work better for the people it serves. This report analyzes these administrative reforms and what they mean for the future of responsive governance in the United States.

A truly responsive government is one that removes unnecessary obstacles from everyday life. Whether an individual is applying for a driver's license, seeking a building permit, or recovering from a disaster, they should not have to navigate a maze of outdated bureaucratic hurdles. By focusing on pragmatic reforms that prioritize customer service and clear communication, we can ensure that taxpayer funds are stewarded wisely and that public systems actually work for the people they were designed to help.

The following legislative examples illustrate what this commitment to excellence looks like on the ground in nine states and showcase how state leaders are focusing on the actual lived experiences of their constituents by implementing solutions that directly resolve common frustrations. Such reforms include digitizing government services and identification, establishing accountability deadlines on permitting and inspections, reducing regulatory red tape, institutionalizing state digital service teams, and streamlining disaster assistance. Across the board, states translated policy into action by sharing a common approach: using clear deadlines, modern technology, and dedicated oversight to remove friction between constituents and the services they depend on.

From Republican-led legislatures in Alabama, Idaho, and Wyoming to Democratic-led efforts in New Jersey and Oregon, these reforms cut across party lines and underscore that the push for efficient, responsive government is not a partisan issue. By embracing technology, establishing accountability standards, and modernizing operations, these nine states are setting a new standard for the nation. We hope this report serves as a blueprint for how we can continue to build a government that works for people, not around them.

AL HB 110

Digital IDs

What the Bill Does

House Bill 110 authorizes a state-approved smartphone app allowing Alabamians to access their driver's license or photo ID digitally. These mobile IDs can be used for traffic stops and most everyday government interactions.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Residents:** Provides ultimate daily convenience by integrating identification into the smartphone ecosystem people already use for banking and shopping, aligning state services with modern digital habits.
- **For Law Enforcement:** Streamlines field interactions by enabling faster, secure digital identity verification during traffic stops, effectively cutting down on routine administrative friction.
- **For Government Agencies:** Drives state-level modernization by reducing manual workflows and the overhead costs of physical card processing, proving that public institutions can keep pace with modern technology.



What the Bill Does

House Bill 585 establishes strict accountability deadlines for state and local building inspections. Starting in July, if a requested electrical, plumbing, or mechanical inspection is not completed within 48 hours, the permit-holder is authorized to hire a qualified third-party inspector and receive a full refund of their government inspection fees. Furthermore, if a project fails an inspection and the government fails to provide a written explanation within three days, the government must refund 10% of the inspection fee to the permit-holder.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Future Occupants:** Accelerates the entire residential approval process, cutting through regulatory red tape so individuals and families can move into their homes faster.
- **For Local Government:** Drives administrative efficiency and repairs public trust by incentivizing clear, prompt communication and removing needless friction from the system.

ID HB 585

Building Inspection Deadlines

NJ EXECUTIVE ORDER 5

Red Tape Reduction

What the Executive Order Does

Executive Order No. 5 establishes a unified, cross-agency permitting team designed to act as a “one-stop shop” to streamline New Jersey’s regulatory processes. The team is tasked with mapping out existing procedures, recommending reasonable processing timelines, and launching an interactive public dashboard this summer — initially piloting with energy and building permits — to allow real-time status tracking. Additionally, the order mandates the collection of baseline data on current backlogs and project financing costs to accurately measure the efficiency of these reforms over time.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Businesses and Residents:** Provides a transparent, centralized system and a user-friendly dashboard to monitor application approvals in real time, drastically improving everyday customer service.
- **For the State Economy:** Boosts statewide economic development by cutting through systemic red tape, making New Jersey a more predictable and attractive place for major project investments.

NEW JERSEY SB 4485 / AB 5728

Codifying State Digital Service Teams

What the Bill Does

Assembly Bill 5728 and Senate Bill 4485 permanently codifies the New Jersey Innovation Authority, transforming the state’s digital service team into a lasting fixture of state government. Officially effective January 5, 2026, this legislation ensures long-term institutional stability for the team (originally created in 2018 as the Office of Innovation). By securing its future, the law enables the Authority to focus on multi-year efforts to upgrade outdated infrastructure, optimize public benefit systems, and integrate emerging technologies like AI across state agencies.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Residents:** Guarantees a permanently modern, user-centered focus within state government, protecting vital upgrades like the streamlined Unemployment Insurance application and AI-driven customer service tools.
- **For Entrepreneurs and Businesses:** Safeguards centralized resources like the state’s digital business hub, maintaining a fast, reliable, and frictionless pipeline for launching new ventures.
- **For State Agencies:** Provides a permanent, in-house technology partner equipped to help various departments automate complex workflows, eliminate administrative backlogs, and efficiently distribute public services.

OK SB 1221

Tracking Delivery Status of License or IDs Sent Via Mail

What the Bill Does

Senate Bill 1221 mandates Service Oklahoma (the state's portal for navigating government services) implement a mail tracking system and expedited delivery option for state driver's licenses and ID cards. By January 1, 2027, residents will be able to monitor the real-time delivery status of their credentials online and opt for expedited shipping for a \$25 fee.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Residents:** Brings modern e-commerce convenience to essential government services, transforming identity credential shipping into a predictable, trackable experience similar to receiving a standard package.
- **For Travelers and Voters:** Provides a crucial, fast-tracked safety net for individuals who need an up-to-date ID immediately to board a plane, vote, secure housing, or finalize financial transactions.
- **For State Administration:** Elevates the customer service capabilities of Service Oklahoma, successfully modernizing state operations to meet the baseline digital expectations of modern life.

OR SB 1561

Expedited Rebuilding After a Natural Disaster

What the Bill Does

Senate Bill 1561 establishes an expedited, administrative process to help families rebuild after natural disasters without facing unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles. Local governments must approve applications to restore or replace damaged or destroyed homes that previously met land use requirements, completely bypassing lengthy land use reviews or new siting mandates. To qualify for this streamlined approval, homeowners must submit their application within three years of the disaster, and construction must begin within four years of permit approval.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Disaster Victims:** Saves families immense time, money, and emotional stress during recovery by eliminating complex paperwork and regulatory delays when they need relief the most.
- **For Communities & Housing:** Protects and restores the local housing supply after a tragedy, ensuring neighborhoods can stabilize and recover predictably.
- **For Local Government:** Restores public faith in government's responsiveness by replacing an obstructive, rigid review process with a compassionate, efficient framework suited for crises.

TN SB 1479

Re-entry ID Program Expansion

What the Bill Does

Senate Bill 1479 requires the Tennessee Department of Corrections to provide inmates with a state-issued driver's license or photo ID card prior to their release. While previous law only required a basic photo ID, this legislation expands the mandate to include a full driver's license for eligible individuals, officially aligning state law with the department's current practice.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Returning Citizens:** Removes immediate roadblocks to societal reentry by ensuring they have the necessary identification to secure employment, find housing, and open a bank account on day one.
- **For Communities:** Enhances public safety and reduces recidivism by supporting a more stable, successful transition, making it less likely that individuals fall back into the justice system.
- **For State Corrections:** Establishes a uniform legal standard that formalizes proactive, efficient release protocols across all state facilities.

TN HB 2552

Shot Clocks for Development Applications, Plans, and Site Inspections

What the Bill Does

House Bill 2552 establishes strict review deadlines for local building development applications starting in 2027. Local governments are given 60 business days to approve an initial application or place it on a meeting agenda, and 30 business days to identify deficiencies or evaluate revisions. If a local government misses either deadline, the application is automatically deemed approved. Furthermore, if a revised application remains deficient after two rounds of evaluation, the government must issue a justified denial and a 50% fee refund or conditionally approve it.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Local Governments:** Drives internal modernization and shifts the permitting process toward a more efficient, communicative, and customer-focused system.
- **For the Community:** Accelerates housing and infrastructure projects while reducing widespread public frustration with slow, bureaucratic bottlenecks.

UT HB 530

State Permitting Council

What the Bill Does

House Bill 530 establishes a new State Permitting Coordinator role within the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity. This coordinator will act as a centralized information source and an inter-agency liaison tasked with bringing clarity, speed, and predictability to the state's permitting process. With hiring currently underway as of June, the role is uniquely positioned to not only guide active applicants but also conduct long-term evaluations of state agency workflows to target and eliminate bureaucratic bottlenecks.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Permit Seekers:** Provides a single, dedicated point person to guide them through complex systems, ensuring they get the resources they need without jumping through redundant hoops.
- **For State Agencies:** Catalyzes lasting institutional reform by empowering a coordinator to audit existing workflows, streamline cross-department communication, and eliminate unnecessary red tape.

VA HB 494

State Hiring Preference for Former Federal Workers

What the Bill Does

House Bill 494 creates a temporary hiring framework within state government to absorb Virginia residents laid off due to recent federal budget cuts and Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) initiatives. Running from July until January 21, 2029, the law directs state agencies to explicitly consider previous federal work experience during the hiring process.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Displaced Workers:** Provides an immediate, supportive pathway to transition their skills into state roles, softening the financial and professional blow of federal workforce reductions.
- **For State Agencies:** Infuses state departments with highly experienced, pre-vetted talent who already understand public sector administration, enhancing the state's operational capacity.
- **For the Regional Economy:** Cushions communities — particularly in high-density federal hubs like Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads — from the economic ripple effects of mass layoffs, protecting local business revenues and the state tax base.

WY HB 2

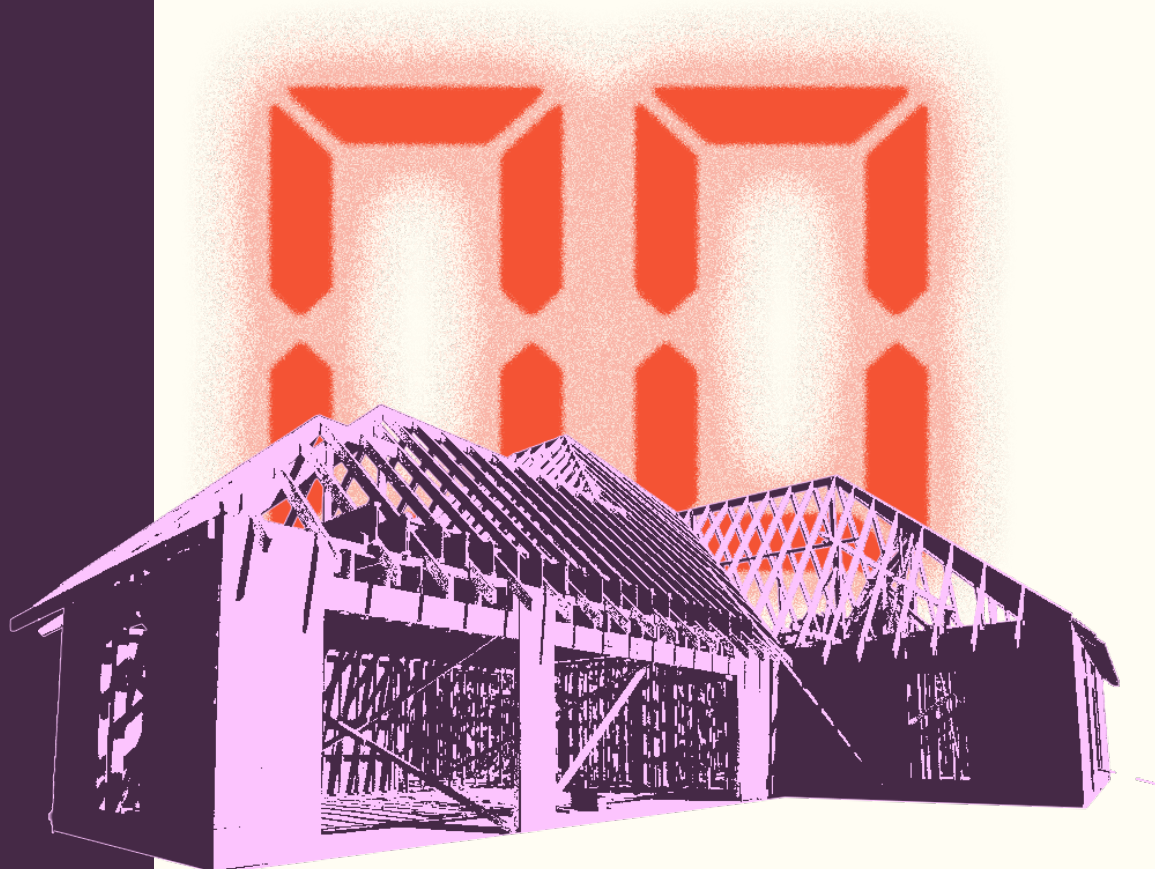
Shot Clocks for Processing Residential Building Permit Applications

What the Bill Does

House Bill 2 (the “Fast Track Permits Act”) establishes strict, standardized review timelines for residential building permits starting in July. Local governments are given 10 business days to determine if a permit application for a one- or two-family home is complete, and 30 days to either approve or deny it. If a municipality misses this 30-day “shot clock,” the application is automatically deemed approved. Additionally, governments must provide written justification for any denials and issue a 10% fee refund if new compliance conditions are added to a permit after its initial approval.

How Constituencies Benefit

- **For Homebuyers and Residents:** Accelerates the overall housing supply by cutting through repetitive red tape, making it faster and easier for families to get new residential projects approved.
- **For Local Communities:** Drives municipal accountability and improves the public customer service experience by ensuring transparent, front-end communication regarding property development.



CONCLUSION:

What This Means Going Forward

The successful reforms achieved across these nine states and a variety of issue areas point to a consistent playbook for responsive government:

Set Deadlines

1

Shot clocks for permitting, inspections, and license processing — with automatic approvals or fee refunds when governments miss them — help residents move into their homes faster and infrastructure projects get underway easier.

Lean in to Modernization

2

Digital IDs, mail tracking, and re-entry ID programs make it easier for residents to prove their identity to access the services they need.

Instill Accountability

3

Permanent digital service teams, public dashboards, and data collection requirements help ensure these reforms continue for years to come.