



Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative
2022 Federal Policy Platform

*Ten Years of Cities
Reclaiming Prosperity
for the Mississippi River*



MRCTI 2022 Capitol Meeting,
Washington, DC March 8-10

MRCTI www.mrcti.org
Virtual Meeting Event

Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative 2022 Policy Platform

Ten Years of Reclaiming Prosperity



Contents

| | |
|---|---------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| 2022 Federal Priorities in Brief | 3 |
| Appropriations Priorities | 5 - 11 |
| Commerce, Justice, Science | 5 |
| Interior, Environment & Related Agencies | 7 |
| Transportation, HUD, & Related Agencies | 11 |
| Policy Priorities | 12 - 19 |
| Water Resources Development Act | 13 |
| National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy Act | 15 |
| Flood Resilience and Taxpayer Savings Act | 16 |
| Climate RESILIENCE Act | 17 |
| National Bottle Bill | 18 |

The Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI) is an association of United States Mayors in ten states along the main stem Mississippi River from headwaters to the Gulf of Mexico. All members of MRCTI are currently serving U.S. mayors. All content of MRCTI publications is congruent to MRCTI policy as adopted pursuant to association bylaws by the Co-Chairs and Executive Committee of the association.

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Introduction

The Mississippi River, Her Time is Now!

We present this Federal Policy Platform for 2022 to our national leaders and regional stakeholders. *This is a transformative and historic moment for the Mississippi River Corridor.* Over \$70 billion is projected to come into the ten-state Mississippi River Corridor over the next five years as part of Jobs Act funding passed in 2021.

101 Cities of Middle America. MRCTI encompasses dynamic urban areas, resource-rich rural towns, and everything in-between. The economies of our region are interdependent. Our strength stems from the diversity of our member communities whose populations span from hundreds to millions. Our Corridor is a national treasure vital to our nation’s economic security and critical to commodity production, manufacturing, and transportation.

We Are a Competitive Region for Jobs Act Grants. The historic flood of 2019, a new record for named storms in 2020, and the resurgence of COVID-19 in 2021 all have combined to create a moment of epic need and epic change. The challenges we face only embolden our resolve to move our region forward. The Jobs Act has the potential to fund transformative projects to completion throughout America. However, this historic funding must be backed and supported with long-term and smart policy; and that is exactly the aim of the *platform* we present here for 2022.

This Platform Uses Our Corridor as a National Model. The Mississippi River Basin produces 92 percent of United States agricultural exports and makes possible hundreds of billions of dollars of fresh-water-dependent manufacturing. Using the value we bring and the impacts we have sustained as a baseline, we can determine the infrastructure best suited to help us mitigate our new climate reality and create policies to assist this work on the ground in our cities.

The Mayors of the Mississippi River present this resilience plan incorporating national climate adaptation, wetland restoration, recycling infrastructure, conservation, co-beneficial land management, and water security. *This plan is worth more than \$3.0 billion that will complement Jobs Act investment, creating an additional 45,000 jobs, and generating more than \$11.8 billion in economic activity and security in addition to the IJJA.*

What follows here are five major policy recommendations together with nine appropriation priorities to comprise our platform for 2022. As a stakeholder in this work, we hope you can join us in championing these proposals for the last session of the 117th Congress.

Appropriation Priorities in brief

Commerce, Justice Science

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| EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance Program U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration | \$50 million |
| EDA Public Works Program U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration | \$150 million |

Interior, Environment, & Related Agencies

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program U.S. Department of Interior, Land & Water Conservation Fund | \$200 million |
| North American Wetlands Conservation Fund U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | \$50 million |
| EPA Categorical Grant: Wetlands U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | \$15 million |
| Section 319 Water Pollution Control Grants, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | \$200 million |
| Drinking Water Infrastructure Resilience & Sustainability Program U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | \$10 million |
| Community Water System Risk and Resilience Program U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | \$35 million |

Transportation, HUD, & Related Agencies

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| Scenic Byways Program U.S. Department of Transportation | \$60 million |
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Authorization Priorities in brief

Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)

The Andrew J. Young Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together (SMRT) Act is an innovative approach that will improve federal coordination, improve infrastructure, support innovative approaches to remove nutrients, and support a thriving economy on the Mississippi River. We ask that Congress include the SMRT Act in the 2022 reauthorization of WRDA.

National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy Act (NCARS)

NCARS fills a vital gap in the current federal government portfolio by providing improved coordination between federal departments.

Flood Resilience and Taxpayer Savings Act

The American tax payer can be relieved of liability for flood damage that is either repetitive and/or certain. This bill ensures that federal investment take into account future flood risk and requires projects are completed with flood resilience capacities the first time.

Climate RESILIENCE Act

Currently, extreme swings in temperature from intense heat to dangerous cold can threaten lives and damage infrastructure across the country. Such impacts are not eligible for disaster declaration or eligible for mitigation funding from FEMA. The Climate RESILIENCE Act addresses such gaps in the nation's adaptation regime.

National Bottle Bill and Recycling Infrastructure Accessibility Act

This bill creates a national bottle deposit program, incentivizing the return of plastic drink bottles. Unreturned funding would help with litter clean-up and recycling programs. The bill will also support the use of more recycled material in plastic bottles, to encourage the recycling market further.

Appropriation Priorities

“A more systemic approach to resilience at corridor scale is needed.”

-Mayor Sharon Weston Broome of Baton Rouge, LA



Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

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| EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance Program | \$50 million |
| U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration | |

Background:

EDA’s Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) Program provides economically distressed communities and regions with grants to provide a wide range of technical, planning, and public works and infrastructure assistance in regions experiencing adverse economic changes that may occur suddenly or over time. These adverse economic impacts may result from a steep decline in manufacturing employment following a plant closure, changing trade patterns, catastrophic natural disasters, a military base closure, or environmental changes and regulations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed business in the United States. In September 2020, Yelp said 163,735 businesses indicated on its website they had closed, including nearly 98,000 permanently. While many businesses may have fared better than first expected, there is no doubt that pandemic has been particularly hard on small businesses that cannot do the same amount of online business that other companies have. Increasing funding to this EDA program will help our communities adjust to the long-term realities that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to our communities.

Issue:

The Economic Adjustment Assistance Program helps states and local entities through Strategy Grants to support the development, updating or refinement of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. It also has Implementation Grants to support the execution of activities identified in comprehensive strategies, such as infrastructure improvements, including site acquisition, site preparation, construction, rehabilitation, and equipping of facilities.

The EAA program is EDA’s most flexible program. Under the EAA program, EDA can fund market and environmental studies, planning or construction grants, and capitalize or recapitalize revolving loan funds to help provide small businesses with the capital they need to grow

Therefore, the Mayors urge Congress to increase funding for the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program to \$50 million in FY 2023 to help communities transition their economies, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has taken a toll on numerous businesses and is fundamentally changing our economy; this program will help our communities adapt.

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| <p>EDA Public Works Grant Program\$150 million U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration</p> |
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Background:

EDA’s Public Works Grant Programs provide economically distressed communities and regions with comprehensive and flexible resources to address a wide variety of economic needs. These programs are focused on Opportunity Zones, which make up a majority of the land along the main stem of the Mississippi River. These flexible grants support new ideas and creative approaches to create economic prosperity in communities.

In FY 2021, the Public Works Grant Program was funded at \$120 million. The CARES Act also allocated \$1.467 billion to Public Works Program as a supplemental in FY 2020. Investments under the Public Works Grant Program can fund projects like distance learning networks, smart buildings, business and industrial parks with fiber optic cable, telecommunications and development facilities, water and sewer system improvements, business incubators, port expansion, and brownfields redevelopment. Projects are judged on their potential to increase the capacity of the community or region to promote job creation and private investment in the regional economy, as well as the likelihood that the project will achieve its projected outcomes.

Issue:

With the increase in funding our Mayors would be able to support a wide variety of programs that are specifically designed for their communities' needs and best suited to ensure their communities are supporting their citizens as soon as possible. Our Mayors understand that our communities will need to look and work differently in a post-pandemic world, with a program like EDA's Public Works Grant program our Mayors will be able to adjust to the new economic realities of a post-COVID-19 world.

Therefore, the Mayors urge Congress to increase funding for the Public Works Grant Program to \$150 million in FY 2023 to help communities address long-term effects that the COVID-19 pandemic will have in communities. Supporting these targeted local approaches will ensure that cities and towns can support economic solutions following the fallout from the pandemic.

Interior, Environment, & Related Agencies

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| Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership.....\$200 million U.S. Department of the Interior, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) |
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Background:

The Mayors applaud the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020, which provides a permanent appropriation of \$900 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) grant program is funded under the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Mayors request that Congress direct \$200 million spent under the Land and Water Conservation Fund to be spent on the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership grant program, as the money is already appropriated this would mean no new funding to the program.

The ORLP program, established in 2014, enables urban communities to create new outdoor recreation spaces, reinvigorate existing parks, and form connections between people and the outdoors in economically underserved communities. This competitive grant program delivers funding to urban areas, defined as jurisdictions of at least 50,000 people, with priority given to projects located in economically disadvantaged areas and lacking in outdoor recreation opportunities.

Issue:

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership is a competitive grant program that goes directly to cities and localities, giving easier access to necessary funding and bypassing the state granting process. Grants are matched at a minimum one-to-one ratio, at least doubling the impact of the federal investment in these communities, with a priority given to projects located in economically disadvantaged areas and places lacking in outdoor recreation opportunities. Grants for project proposals range in size from \$250,000 to \$750,000 and planning grants can be up to \$75,000.

Further, the program is funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund which invests a small portion of federal offshore drilling fees towards protecting important land, water, and recreation areas for all Americans. The fund is paid for using a very small percentage of offshore oil and gas drilling receipts. Allowing the program to have no impact on federal taxpayers, while improving their communities.

Therefore, the Mayors urge that Congress direct \$200 million spent under the Land and Water Conservation Fund to be spent on the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership grant program in FY2023. This would be an increase of \$50 million over the levels allocated for the program by the Secretary of Interior.

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| North American Wetlands Conservation Fund | \$50 million |
| U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | |
| EPA Categorical Grant: Wetlands | \$15 million |
| U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | |

Background:

Wetlands are a complex ecosystem that provides a myriad of services and benefits to near-water communities including water quality improvement, pollution control, flood protection, fisheries, recreation, and commercial harvests of rice, reeds, and hay. For instance, a single wetland can remove the same amount of pollutants as a \$5 million treatment plant without the adjoining energy, maintenance, and capital costs as the built equivalent. It is difficult to overstate the benefits of wetlands due to their efficient water regulating capacity.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Fund (WCF) assists local government agencies in building programs to protect, manage and restore wetlands. States and local governments are eligible to apply for financial resources out of the WCF providing a 50 percent match. The Fund provides applicants with some opportunity to develop and refine comprehensive state, local government wetland programs, however, the majority of the award should go toward specific wetland restoration projects.

The Wetland Grants at the EPA assist state, tribal, local government, and interstate/intertribal entities in building programs to protect, manage and restore wetlands. The program specifically funds monitoring and assessment, regulatory activities, restoration and protection, and Water Quality Standards for Wetlands.

The Issue:

The Upper Mississippi River Basin has lost over 80 percent or 64 million acres of wetlands since the close of the 18th century leaving our region exposed to disasters that would normally be absorbed by wetland capabilities. A single wetland acre can store as much as one million gallons of water. Collectively, wetlands provide several hundred million dollars in water flow and regulatory services annually.

Further, outdoor recreation and tourism comprise the second-largest economy on the Mississippi River supporting a sport fishing industry that generates several billion dollars in annual revenue. Up to 90 percent of recreational fish catch depends on wetlands for an essential portion of the life cycle. On the terrestrial side, half of all North American bird species nest or feed in wetlands, and the Mississippi River Valley is home to the largest most populated migratory flyway in the continent supporting a multi-billion bird and large game economy.

Therefore, the MRCTI Mayors call upon Congress to support the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund at \$50 million for FY 2023, only \$3.5 million over the FY 2021 enacted level. In tandem with the WCF allocation, MRCTI mayors also request that \$15 million be allocated for the EPA’s Categorical Grant program for Wetlands, this would be roughly \$1 million over the amount allocated in FY2021.

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| Section 319 Water Pollution Control Grants.....\$200 million U.S. Environmental Protection Agency |
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Background:

EPA’s Clean Water Act Section 319 Categorical State Grant Program provides grants (known as “Water Pollution Control Grants”) to states for prevention and control measures that improve water quality. \$164.92 million was enacted for FY 2016 for Clean Water Act Nonpoint Source (Section 319) Grant Program (\$5.66 million over the FY 2015 enacted level). This spending is directed at state and tribal efforts designed to implement water pollution controls and strengthen nutrient control efforts consistent with EPA state nutrient reduction framework.

The funding level for FY 2020 of \$172 and FY 2021 of \$177 million increased the spending for 319 grants as compared to the FY 2019 enacted level in order to begin meeting the needs of states for controlling the massive nutrient-intensive landscapes they are faced with managing. This resource assists states in securing the agricultural industry and aiding our manufacturing base because nutrients lost from the field to our rivers comprise a cost to farmers in nutrient replacement, and a cost to manufacturers and cities to clean the water before it can be used to power industry. The combined agriculture and manufacturing economies just in the 246 counties that comprise the Mississippi River corridor generate \$422.6 billion.

The Issue:

Section 319 Water Pollution Control Grants are the only grant within the EPA portfolio specifically intended to reduce non-point pollutants and toxins from entering waters of the U.S. The Mayors see nutrient loading as one of the most significant threats facing the water quality of the Mississippi River and all its aquatic systems that support cities’ economies.

MRCTI has held discussions with stakeholders throughout the corridor to determine how mayors can play a valuable role in reducing nutrient loading into the Mississippi River. Out of the ten Mississippi River states, only Minnesota and Illinois have set both nutrient reduction goals and timelines. Two states have set reduction goals, but no timelines, and six states have neither. States have explained to us that budget constraints are one of the main causes for not pursuing nutrient reduction more directly. Funding is needed to deploy robust monitoring as well as conduct the research needed to set credible goals. Thus, mayors are working to see how they can help states secure more funding resources through the only non-point source grant program – 319.

Therefore, the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative Mayors ask Congress to fund the Section 319 Categorical State Grant Program’s Water Pollution Control Grants at \$200 million for FY 2023. Further, Mayors recommend the U.S. EPA partner with the Natural Resource Conservation Service within USDA to ensure state 319 Grants plans include nutrient reduction capacities at an influential level. This type of cross-agency collaboration on evaluating grant applications has precedent in the HUD administered Sustainable Communities Grant Program where multiple agencies advised on application viability on several performance metrics.

Drinking Water Infrastructure Resilience & Sustainability....\$10 million
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Community Water System Risk and Resilience Program...\$35 million
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Background:

Water infrastructure resilience, sustainability, innovation, and risk reduction were parceled out into a variety of short-term programs made available through the 2018 passage of America's Water Infrastructure Act. These programs are authorized at modest amounts totaling only \$264 million for the entire nation. These programs are designed to offer key infusions of capital into large or small water systems that require single fund infusions to reach project success.

The Issue:

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, there is a \$300 billion investment shortfall in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure investment. The drinking water wastewater investment shortfall for the ten states along the Mississippi River is \$92.1 billion. Though the investments in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will make significant investments to help with this infrastructure, these programs fulfill very specific purposes that are needed in our communities and did not receive funding in that package.

Two accounts, in particular, assist cities with better leveraging the multi-billion state revolving loan program (SRFs) and the innovative Water Infrastructure Financing Innovation Act credit program (WIFIA): The Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience & Sustainability Program and the Community Water System Risk and Resilience Program. Though only authorized for a combined maximum funding level of under thirty million dollars, both grants add to city resilience and mitigation capacities for the extensive water system infrastructure that must be maintained. The drinking water system grant offers aid to help small or disadvantaged communities prepare their drinking water infrastructure for threats like floods, hurricanes, and hydrologic changes.

Beneficially, the community water system program expands on the drinking water system grant by focusing on and augmenting the community water system emergency plan requirements under EPA. Local governments can use the community water system risk and resilience program for planning by expanding their emergency plan capacity and application. During the 2019 floods, cities along the Mississippi River sustained flooding for over 270 days in some places. High water for this long-duration created new water system impacts not typically seen during flood events such as massive subsoil shifting, a record number of sinkholes, and systemic damage to water treatment plants.

Therefore, MRCTI mayors call on Congress to fund at the full authorized level the drinking water and community water system resilience grants to provide cities a group of funding options for the diverse infrastructure problems facing aging municipal water systems. These programs will further support the substantive investment made in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Transportation, HUD, & Related Agencies

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| Scenic Byways Program.....\$60 million US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration |
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Background:

The Scenic Byways program under the Federal Highway Administration is a collaborative effort that was established to recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways based on one or more archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities.

The Great River Road running directly next to the Mississippi River is arguably the longest and most important scenic byway in America. The road travels through many of our communities and encourages tourists to explore the Mighty Mississippi and our communities. The road is an important way to connect our communities for the 3,000-mile journey from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. Along the Great River Road National Scenic Byway, there is a wide variety of tourism amenities as well as Interpretive Centers that help travelers experience the many facets of the Mississippi River Region.

The Scenic Byways program provides grants to benefit the byway traveler's experience, whether it will help manage the intrinsic qualities that support the byway's designation, shape the byway's story, interpret the story for visitors, or improve visitor facilities along the byway. Improving the Great River Road is vital to increasing the sense of history and beauty that the Mississippi River represents to our nation and our communities. The Scenic Byways program was funded at \$16 million for FY 2021.

Issue:

During COVID-19, driving has again increased in popularity as a safe activity that can be enjoyed uninterrupted in everyday life. Increasing funding to the Scenic Byways program will help to meet the needs of this increased usage and beautify these locations. Byways like the Great River Road can be a way to increase tourism and help restart the tourism industry after the economic hits taken because of the pandemic.

Therefore, the Mayors urge Congress to increase funding for the Scenic Byway program to \$60 million for FY 2023 which is in line with the authorized amount in Scenic Byways Reauthorization Act. This increased funding will help to improve the Great River Road and ensure that generations to come will be able to enjoy this national treasure.

“The new and innovative partnerships we as a collective of Mayors along the entire River have forged are transformational.”

-Mayor Robert Eastern of East St. Louis, IL



Water Resources Development Act;

National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy Act (NCARS)

Flood Resilience and Taxpayer Savings Act

Federal Resilience Act

Recycling Infrastructure Accessibility Act

National Bottle Bill



Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act

Water Resources Development Act Reauthorization

House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works

Congressman Bennie Thompson (MS) has introduced H.R. 4729, the Andrew J. Young Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act (SMRT Act) for the purpose of sustaining one of the nation's most important natural resources relying on and expanding authority enacted via the 2014 Water Resources Development Act. The Mayors are fully supportive of the Andrew J. Young SMRT Act and request that the bill language be placed in the Water Resources Development Act.

The SMRT Act creates the Following Organs

- 1) *Federal Leadership Committee* comprised of critical federal agencies, one governor, and one Mayor to coordinate and advise on federal mobilization to carry out the Act.
- 2) *National Mississippi River Program Office* to develop and implement a Comprehensive Mississippi River Restoration Plan as well as studies and investigations called for under the Act.
- 3) *Comprehensive Mississippi River Restoration Plan* assembled and managed by the Mississippi River Program Office, this plan will set-out a ten-state strategy to restore at scale the critical national assets of the entire Mississippi River Corridor.

The SMRT Act Establishes the Following Grants and Studies

- 1) Infrastructure Repair, Resilience, and Adaptation Grant to repair, replace, or restore critical natural and built infrastructure assets that have sustained considerable damage due to repetitive loss events through spending lines for planning, resilience, and build-back-better activities.
- 2) Sustainable Economic Development Grant to allow communities to shift their economies from costly industrial base to clean manufacturing, commodity movement, and/or tourism.
- 3) State Sedimentation and Errand Nutrient Assistance Grant for states to pursue nutrient reduction strategies more aggressively in the form of planning, innovative achievement of nutrient reduction goals such as nutrient trading, capitalization for best technology, support of on-field sustainable agriculture practices and the development of new markets for cover crops.
- 4) Mississippi River Corridor Economic Profile updated every five years to profile the regional economic activity dependent upon the Mississippi Corridor.
- 5) Watershed Monitoring Network calls for the development of a Water quality and flow monitoring network for the Mississippi River Valley.
- 6) Disaster Resilience and Environmental Services Valuation provides data, research, and investigation that offers economic impact of all MVD ecosystem restoration work in terms of disaster resilience and enhanced environmental services to be made part of the MVD's cost benefit analysis for all ecosystem restoration projects.
- 7) Trust Fund Feasibility Study to determine the feasibility of establishing a multi-user-fee-supported trust fund for the Mississippi River's ecological sustainability and built infrastructure integrity and repair.



Appropriations and ROI

The SMRT Act authorizes up to \$500 million per year for five years to fund activities prescribed. Since funding resilience can generate a return of up to \$12.00 for every \$1.00 invested and the environmental services of the corridor produce nearly \$500 billion in annual revenue for the nation as well as billions of dollars more in water regulation and production services the actual cost projected for this Act is close to 0.1 percent of the return if benefits remain unchanged.

Permeable Margins of Jurisdiction and Authority

The Mississippi River Corridor is vast with many interests and players, thus a multi-lateral approach is necessary to have an impact on climate, resilience, and economic security. This legislation works to address issues outside traditional silos and cross links original authorities among agencies so intergovernmental, inter-economic, and interdisciplinary sciences are essential.

Timelines Arranged

- 1) 120 days after enactment, the EPA Administrator in concurrence with the Department of the Interior shall establish a narrowly tailored temporary version of the National Program Office to immediately assist and coordinate the early activities of the Secretary and the Federal Leadership Committee until a permanent version may be developed in the Mississippi River region.
- 2) 6 months after enactment, the Administrator shall invite proposals from the ten states along the Mississippi River to host the National Mississippi River Program Office.
- 3) 6 months after the Administrator invites proposals from the ten states along the Mississippi River to host the National Mississippi River Program Office, states' responses are due to be submitted to the Administrator.
- 4) 9 months after enactment, the Federal Leadership Committee shall prepare and publish a broad strategy for coordinated implementation of existing programs and projects to guide efforts to protect and restore the Mississippi River Corridor.
- 5) 2.5 years after enactment, the National Program Office shall develop a comprehensive Mississippi River Restoration Plan.
- 6) 3 years after enactment, the Trust Fund Feasibility Study shall be reported to Congress.
- 7) Every 5 years after enactment, the Program Office shall update to the Economic Profile.
- 8) Every year after the publishing of the Comprehensive Mississippi River Restoration Plan, at least one project must be carried out as prescribed by the Act.

From Corridor to Basin Effect

This legislation is designed to set the stage for management of the Mississippi River region from corridor (10 states) to basin (31 states) scale over time as the intent, inquiry, and approach are perfected starting with the activities described in the SMRT Act.

National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy Act

H.R. 6461 and S.3531

House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Background:

The devastating flooding on the Mississippi River cost over \$20 billion in 2019 alone. Disaster mitigation is crucial to prevent the costs associated with disaster recovery. Every dollar spent by the federal government on disaster mitigation has proven itself to save \$6.00 to \$12.00 for every dollar spent on post-disaster recovery. This is why the Mayors have long advocated for a whole of government approach to improve how disaster resilience is managed across the federal government.

The bipartisan National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy (NCARS) Act of 2022 (H.R. 6461 and S.3531) was introduced to develop a unified federal plan and increase federal coordination to increase the resilience of frontline communities in the United States. The NCARS Act would also require an Implementation Plan to ensure the Strategy is effectively translated into improved and streamlined federal adaptation operations.

The Issue:

Under NCARS, the federal government will develop a whole-of-government National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy and Implementation Plan. This plan will be updated every three years and inform future strategies that are developed. NCARS will also create a Chief Resilience Officer position at the White House, this is a position that numerous states have already implemented and will help to focus the federal government.

NCARS will also support the establishment of up to five interagency resilience Working Groups and a non-federal Partners Council to assist with the production of the Strategy and strengthen lines of communication about resilience between federal agencies, state government, local government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. These steps will minimize redundancies across agencies and improve the ability of the federal government to implement resilience initiatives, particularly as many new resources are becoming available at the federal level.

Therefore, the Mayors urge Congress to pass the National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy as soon as possible to help communities like ours on the Mississippi River to improve their resilience to natural disasters. We recommend that \$2,000,000 be made available each year through fiscal 2032 to fulfill the need under this strategy.

Flood Resilience and Taxpayer Savings Act

H.R. 481

House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Background:

The Congressional Budget Office has reported that U.S. economic losses associated with heavy precipitation, storm surges, and hurricane winds could average \$54 billion every year and require Federal spending averaging \$17 billion per year. When many communities are forced to rebuild after a storm or natural disaster, to get reimbursement from the federal government they must build to the same level that was originally destroyed without taking into account long-term consequences without any calculation as to the future needs of the projects.

If the federal government takes into account, the future risk of floods being placed on the structure will ensure that the structure will not need to be rebuilt in the future and thus save taxpayers from continually rebuilding structures and ensuring that projects will meet the needs of the community for years to come.

Issue:

The bipartisan Flood Resiliency and Taxpayer Savings Act of 2020 (H.R. 481) was introduced to ensure that the federal government uses a cost-effective disaster risk management strategy to safeguard the nation's infrastructure, businesses, and communities, as well as conserve taxpayer resources. The bill will direct federal agencies to consider and plan for future flood risk as they evaluate spending federal dollars, including the entire lifespan of a project. The bill also requires agency leaders, for projects that are currently or in the future will be in flood-prone areas, to use the best available data about current and future flood risk including FEMA maps, state and local data, hydrologic studies, and other information.

In the absence of concrete data, ensures agencies incorporate appropriate safeguards to shield communities from future damage and loss, including the use of structure elevation, hardening, nature-based systems, or other mitigation strategies. The inclusion of nature-based solutions as well as flexibility in this bill makes it crucial for communities that face regular flooding and need to improve their current protection from future floods.

Therefore, the Mayors are in full support of the Flood Resiliency and Taxpayer Savings Act as it will better protect our communities and ensure that future data informs projects to protect our communities. The bill does not have any direct costs but will ensure that federal dollars are more effectively spent.

Climate RESILIENCE Act

H.R. 6396

House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Background:

If your city faces an extended period of heat or cold weather that causes issues, the city is not able to receive a “major disaster” declaration by the federal government. This means that all the reimbursements that happen at the federal level to deal with these disaster declarations are not eligible. Further, it is often the most vulnerable such as the homeless, the elderly, and children are affected by these issues. As we have seen, in other parts of the country when cold weather hits a climate that is not accustomed to such temperatures, pipes breaking and other issues can cause major issues and substantial damage. Further, sustained high temperatures can be devastating to communities and vulnerable populations.

Further expanding the definition can also help with mitigative efforts to improve building insulation/HVAC systems, increase urban tree cover and green space, planning, and other activities. Cities being able to protect themselves from extremely high or low temperatures are a crucial part of protecting their cities and communities. These temperatures can have tangible impacts that can cause deaths and significant damage in a city. By having FEMA recognize these issues we will be able to better protect our communities.

Issue:

Climate Risk and Emergency Support In Livable Inclusive and Equitable Neighborhoods and Communities Everywhere (RESILIENCE) Act was introduced early in 2022 to strengthen the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) approach to climate disasters by ensuring that extreme temperature events are included. The RESILIENCE Act will Improve FEMA's disaster definition to include extreme temperature events, like heat waves and freezes. The bill expands the list of eligible activities funded under FEMA's pre-disaster and post-disaster mitigation programs, including improving hazard resistance of structures, enhancing natural infrastructure, and working with community organizations to improve planning.

The bill further, enhances the hazard mitigation planning process to better integrate states’, tribes’, and territories’ hazard mitigation planning into other mitigation planning processes, also includes a focus on resiliency planning and investments. The bill further improves FEMA's definitions and cost-share eligibility requirements for disadvantaged communities and underserved communities, to reduce the cost-sharing needed as well as financial and non-financial technical assistance for hazard mitigation planning.

Therefore, the Mayors are in full support of the Climate RESILIENCE Act as it is a crucial piece of legislation that will close a hole that has long allowed these extreme temperature events to not be a part of FEMA disaster assistance.

“Since 2018, Mississippi River Mayors have been working to reduce plastic waste; an effort which must be supported by additional recycling infrastructure.”

- Mayor Bob Gallagher of Bettendorf, IA, shown here with the Mayors of Davenport and Moline at the launch of the Quad Cities plastic pollution data project, Oct 2021.



Recycling Infrastructure Accessibility Act (INTRODUCTION PENDING)
National Bottle Bill (INTRODUCTION PENDING)

Background:

In September 2018, Mississippi River Mayors announced a commitment with state legislators and companies in an effort to reduce plastic waste. The Mississippi River provides billions of gallons of freshwater to industry each day and drinking water to 20 million people in 50 cities. But when up to 80% of the plastic in our oceans comes from land-based sources and the Mississippi River drains an expansive 31-state landscape, it becomes clear that possibly 40 percent of plastic pollution in the Gulf originates from the Mississippi River.

In the years since, in conjunction with the United Nations, National Geographic, and the University of Georgia we have launched a Mississippi River Plastic Reduction Initiative aimed at first documenting and tracking plastic waste on the Mississippi River. We have already worked with community groups in St. Paul, St. Louis, Baton Rouge, and the Quad Cities region to document the large plastic problem that exists on the Mississippi River.

Compounding the plastic issues facing water quality of the Mississippi River is the fact that China announced four years ago that it would no longer take any plastic waste from the United States closing the door to a 25-year running outlet for such material. About 45 percent of the world’s plastic waste set for recycling was being processed by China until 2018. Nations like the U.S. will need to recycle waste at home with inadequate recycling infrastructure.

Issue:

Although, not formally introduced this potential bill which has yet to be introduced would create a standardized bottle deposit system for the country and is expected to be introduced as a bipartisan bill. The bill would only apply to beverage bottles with a deposit of 10 cents for bottles under 24 ounces and 15 cents for beverage bottles over that size.

Further, the bill would require minimum recycled content percentages in certain plastic beverage container types. The bill also sets out minimum post-consumer resin (PCR) requirements for new plastic beverage containers, specifying that the PCR supplies must be in the U.S. The minimum starts at 25% by 2025, then 50% by 2030, 70% by 2035, and 80% by

2040. This would create a larger market for recycling at the municipal level and help support local recycling programs. The bill would also ensure that the unredeemed deposits are invested in the collection, recycling, and reuse infrastructure in the state or region.

Therefore, the Mayors urge the introduction and passage of a bipartisan National Bottle Bill that will create a nationwide system for bottle deposits and ensure that producers increase the use of recycled materials in their containers. This bill will be a vital step to ensure we reduce our use of new plastic and are able to recycle a higher percentage of the plastic that we do use.

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