

Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative

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Battling Floods, Mississippi River Mayors Urge National Infrastructure Bill

Mayors Present Strategy to Renew Mississippi River's Natural and Built Infrastructure to the Trump Administration and Congress

March 7, 2018, Washington, DC – Twenty mayors representing cities along the Mississippi River are gathered this week for the sixth Capitol meeting of the [Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative](#) (MRCTI). On Wednesday, in meetings with lawmakers charged with shepherding the infrastructure bill, the mayors unveiled an investment strategy to renew the Mississippi River's natural and built infrastructure through major vehicles such as direct spending from appropriations, the Farm Bill, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), and the White House Infrastructure Plan.

The mayors' strategy of ten appropriation priorities and ten authorization priorities addresses the acute shocks and chronic stresses from persistent disasters the region has sustained over the last several years, totaling more than \$200 billion in losses since 2005, \$50 billion since 2011, and over \$10 billion since 2016.

In Midst of Flooding, Mississippi River Mayors Push Infrastructure, Resilience

The mayors recommend a \$7.5 billion infrastructure investment plan that supports eight major U.S. industry sectors, creates over 140,000 jobs, continues 1.5 million jobs, sustains our ecological assets to power our economy, mitigates for hundreds of millions of dollars in disaster impacts, and generates \$22.5 billion in economic activity. Mayors presented encompassing recommendations for support of federal programs administered by EPA, DOT, FEMA, DOI, USDA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as essential to the nation's economy.

"The River was almost ten feet above flood stage in my city of Greenville, MS just a few days ago. I'm here with my fellow mayors who are experiencing flooding from Missouri to Baton Rouge, LA to urge investment in resilience and mitigation," said **Erick Simmons, Mayor of Greenville, MS**.

"The River is responsible for making our nation's only trade surplus possible. We all have an interest in protecting this economic lifeline," said **Frank Klipsch, Mayor of Davenport, IA and Co-Chair of MRCTI**.

“We’ve got a real opportunity here. With sequestration caps removed and the \$200 billion infrastructure plan making its way into legislation, this is our shot at restoring our economy. But, we have to do it right, we have to include resilience and sustainability capacities – we have to include natural infrastructure lest all our investment be washed away by the next flood,” said **Lionel Johnson, Mayor of St. Gabriel, LA and Co-Chair of MRCTI.**

“Our city of St. Louis relies on that River. We have the third largest inland port in the nation by tonnage, we depend on the Mississippi River for our drinking water supply, and our beverage industry uses millions of gallons per day to manufacture their products. All that infrastructure needs a broad plan that includes conservation, port infrastructure, and water quality improvement,” said **Lyda Krewson, Mayor of St. Louis.**

Mayors Propose Ways to Improve White House Infrastructure Plan

Mayors laid out recommendations to improve on the White House Infrastructure Plan urging that legislation drafted from the plan include resilience, mitigation, and principles of sustainable development.

“If the point here is to save the taxpayer money and create infrastructure projects that perform better, then we must include resilience and sustainability as criteria for awarding funds out of the proposed infrastructure incentive grant,” said **Jay Hollowell, Mayor of Helena-West Helena, AR.**

“We had a \$10 billion disaster in Baton Rouge in 2016. I’m happy to report that two-thirds of the infrastructure plan we proposed last year was achieved through Congress in 2017. Now we have a greater opportunity with the larger infrastructure bill, the Farm Bill, and WRDA. Farm Bill conservation programs make our water cleaner and ensure sustainable agriculture products keep flowing through my port,” said **Sharon Weston Broome, Mayor of Baton Rouge, LA.**

Mayors Cautioned Against Circumventing Critical Environmental Reviews

Mayors explained to key authorizers and appropriators that environmental services such as clean water are not inhibitors of industry; they are crucial resources for manufacturing. Further, the River is a primary drinking source for 20 million people in 50 cities.

“The Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, EPA permitting, and NEPA all protect our economy because they prioritize the health and safety of our communities. Efficiency is important, and so is a healthy workforce,” said **Sarah Strommen, Mayor of Ramsey, MN.**

“We are fighting for these changes to the infrastructure plan because protecting the waterway is critical to our safety, and key to America's prosperity,” said **Frank Klipsch, Mayor of Davenport, IA and Co-Chair of MRCTI.**

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The Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative is comprised of 84 mayors and the association represents cities on the main stem Mississippi from Minnesota to Louisiana. More information can be found on our website at www.MRCTI.org

About the Mississippi River

The Mississippi River is critical natural asset. As the ecological linchpin to the 31-state Mississippi River Basin, the River supports the most agriculturally productive region on the planet; creates nearly \$500 billion in annual revenue; provides drinking water for more than 20 million people; transports 40 percent of the nation's agricultural output; and directly supports more than one 1.5 million jobs.