Mayors of the Mississippi River Join Reps. Angie Craig and Rodney Davis on Introduction of Resilience Legislation

Innovative Bill creates FEMA low-interest loan program for cities to invest in disaster resilient infrastructure

Washington, DC: Today, Mayors from along the Mississippi River joined members of Congress that are part of the Mississippi River Caucus in the U.S. House to announce an innovative solution to mitigating for disaster impacts.

U.S. Reps. Angie Craig (MN-02) and Rodney Davis (IL-13) introduced landmark bi-partisan legislation to create a low-interest loan program for states to fund mitigation projects that reduce the risks and costs of disasters. The bill, H.R. 3779, called the Resilience Revolving Loan Fund Act, originally proposed by the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative in March 2019, is authored by the Ms. Craig and Mr. Davis; and follows months of discussion with local mayors affected by a severe flood season as well as FEMA. Loans would be available for projects that minimize the risk of wildfire, earthquake, flood, storm surge, chemical spills, and other events.

2019 has seen the longest and largest Midwest flood season in recorded history implicating not just the ten-state corridor of the Main Stem Mississippi River, but the 31-state Mississippi River Basin. The flooding has damaged homes, temporarily displaced families, and delayed farmers’ planting at record levels. In response, local mayors and community leaders expressed the need for proactive investment in critical natural infrastructure such as wetlands, marshes, forests, riparian buffers, reconnected flood plain, reconnected backwater areas as well as levee reconfiguration.

Mayors have been asking for new tools to help them meet the level of disasters on the ground. From damaged infrastructure to emergency response, Mayors have been incurring significant expenses with some estimates placing losses above $2 billion for the Mississippi River Valley proper. A Resilience Revolving Loan Fund could help cities better prepare, reduce costs, and build partnerships.

"2019 has been a record year for us in Davenport in terms of flooding. From the drought of 2012 to the excessive heatwave that gripped our area last week, Iowa has seen several multi-century events stack-up and worsen over the past few years. We need solutions to these impacts that are different than the same old conventional approach - we need real innovation. The RRF provides a new tool to help us prepare. We're especially supportive of the sponsors prioritizing for natural infrastructure projects in the bill," highlighted Mayor Frank Klipsch of Davenport, IA, Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative.
"The powerful aspect of a revolving loan fund approach is that it motivates diverse partnerships. A city needs committed partners and stakeholders engaged in order to make a resilience loan project work. This is not a grant - the RRF will require that we present efforts with a strong economic case for restoring our natural infrastructure and we can do that. Plus, the RRF is a tremendous example of different levels of government working together for real results," said Mayor Lionel Johnson of St. Gabriel, LA, Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative.

"When the Mayors of the Mississippi River proposed the passage of a Resilience Revolving Loan Fund (RRF) to Congress this past March, Congresswoman Craig led the way from the very beginning, working with Minnesota Mayors and beyond in over ten states. Disasters are costing our economy as much as 8 percent annually. The American taxpayer gets a return of over $6.00 for every $1.00 put into resilience and mitigation. The RRF is simply good fiscal policy that can create real change on the ground," said Mayor Sean Dowse of Red Wing, MN.

"This Resilience Revolving Loan Fund could be a game-changer for us. The longest and largest flood in recorded history has taken a toll on my city. I congratulate Ms. Craig and Mr. Davis for championing the cause of our communities. The RRF will enable us as Mayors to bring new and innovative resilience projects on line," said Mayor Rick Emberlin of Grafton, IL and Illinois Chair for the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative.

Mayors are pushing for more systemic region-scale approaches to resilience to meet the magnitude of the disasters they are sustaining, can assist in protecting multiple economies, and shift the emphasis from response to preparedness.

"My home flooded as a result of the 1,000-year rain event of 2016. It took me nearly a year and a half to return. Clearly, I am personally committed to finding solutions to the increasingly frequent and intense disasters we are sustaining. The Resilience Revolving Loan can be a transformative option for us Mayors to realize preparedness at a level that would be otherwise unobtainable or far out into the future. The good news is that an RRF can assist all the economies that operate in my city including the port of Southern Louisiana, the nation's largest inland port by tonnage," said Mayor Sharon Weston Broome of Baton Rouge, LA and Louisiana Chair for the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative.

"If our City had all the money we've spent since 2008 on temporary mitigation for these disasters, we would have a fortune to put toward a resilience loan for a permanent solution. 2019 has impacted Missouri from the Missouri River on one side to the Mississippi River on the other with plenty of impacts in between. I fail to understand why there wouldn't be full support of an RRF," said Mayor Jo Anne Smiley of Clarksville, MO.

“It’s not like (the water is) going to go away. It’s just going to go downstream and so we’ve got to figure out how we’re going to keep all the cities protected along the way and certainly saving lives and businesses and economic development is a piece of that,” emphasized Mayor Diana Broderson of Muscatine, IA.
"The Delta has been flood-fighting non-stop now for nearly nine months. If we are going to preserve and enhance our economy, we will need to achieve real resilience. Some of the most vulnerable communities to climate risk are in the south. Alleviating vulnerability means no longer approaching solutions just inside our backyard, but at regional and corridor scale. That’s exactly what we’re doing here today by moving the Resilience Revolving Loan Fund forward - Mayors, states, and members of Congress partnering for positive change," stated Mayor Errick Simmons of Greenville, MS.

Motivated locally, but thinking regionally, MRCTI Mayors are realizing support from their constituents to pursue new approaches that shift risk, mitigate injury, and enhance benefits.

“I think what we’re seeing here is people realizing that the conventional solutions are no longer enough, a new approach is needed because these disasters are coming more often and with more intensity than ever before,” summarized Colin Wellenkamp, Executive Director of MRCTI.

The Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative is comprised of 90 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](http://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.

More information is available at [www.mrcti.org](http://www.mrcti.org). Contact: Jim Gwinner JGwinner@LS2Group.com, 314-791-2774

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