



THE UNITED STATES
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



March 13, 2024

The Honorable Tom Carper
Chairman
Committee on the Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
513 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on the Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
170 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
1135 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2506

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4702

Dear Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen:

On behalf of the state and local elected leaders that our organizations represent, the National Governors Association (NGA), the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the National Association of Counties (NACo), the National League of Cities (NLC) and the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the authorization process for the 2024 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) continues. We maintain that perpetuating a strong water infrastructure system and ensuring access to clean and safe drinking water is essential to supporting the nation's economic growth and global competitiveness. Our members stand ready to work with you to ensure passage of a new bipartisan WRDA bill in 2024. As your committees begin to develop legislation, we offer the following as a framework:

Biennial Authorization

WRDA is critical in protecting, maintaining and further developing our water infrastructure systems including ports, harbors, waterways and protecting our natural resources. It provides states and local governments with added stability necessary to meet water infrastructure needs while also supporting the safety, environmental protection and economic development of our communities. In the past decade, Congress was able to enact five separate water resource development packages on a biennial, bipartisan basis. We strongly urge Congress to stay this course and approve this vital bipartisan legislation in 2024 and continue to maintain a two-year authorization schedule moving forward.

Intergovernmental Collaboration

We were encouraged by the 2018 provisions requiring the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to develop a process to formally consult with stakeholders, including state and local governments, on future and pending WRDA projects, annual district budgets, deauthorized projects and guidance documents. The 2018 provision ensures that unique perspectives on water infrastructure projects within communities are considered. Our organizations encourage you to continue to build on this meaningful consultation with state and local governments to foster a greater consensus and

increase the effectiveness of USACE overall. Recognizing the role of state and local governments in implementing federal laws, in 1995, Congress passed the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act to control, if not eliminate, the imposition of unfunded federal mandates on states and localities. Additionally, in 1999, Executive Order 13132 was signed, explicitly requiring all federal agencies to formally consult with state and local governments on proposed regulations that will have a substantial direct impact on them.

Maintenance and Modernization of our Nation's Ports and Harbors


We were pleased that WRDA 2020 unlocked billions of dollars in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund for maintenance dredging activities outside discretionary budget limitations. We continue to encourage Congress to appropriate the maximum amount of allowable funds for this purpose and make them available immediately to increase investment in our nation's economy and infrastructure and to create and sustain U.S. jobs, maximizing the capability of USACE. It is vital that we continue to build off previous federal efforts to ensure our nation's ports and harbors remain competitive globally. Continued support for the beneficial use of dredged material will also be essential for meeting economic and environmental goals.

Flooding Mitigation and Resilience

With the rise in increasingly catastrophic extreme weather events, intense flooding has become an unwelcome reality for a growing number of state and local governments. We support congressional efforts that provide the necessary aid to states and local governments to ensure they have the capabilities to mitigate potential flood and storm damage, including using natural infrastructure and dam safety initiatives. As these severe weather events become more commonplace, our members and their constituents ask for a strong federal partner and funding to make our communities more resilient.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the safety and modernization of our nation's water infrastructure needs remain a top national priority in this sixth consecutive WRDA. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us: Ben Nasta (NCSL) at 202-624-3597 or benjamin.nasta@ncsl.org; Richard Lukas (NGA) at 202-624-3623 or rlukas@nga.org; Sarah Gimont (NACo) at 202-942-4254 or sgimont@naco.org; Carolyn Berndt (NLC) at 202-626-3101 or Berndt@nlc.org; Judy Sheahan (USCM) at 202-861-6775 or jsheahan@usmayors.org.

Sincerely,



Matthew D. Chase
CEO and Executive Director National Association of
Counties



Tim Storey
Chief Executive Officer
National Conference of State Legislators



Bill McBride Executive Director
National Governors Association



Clarence E. Anthony
CEO and Executive Director
National League of Cities



Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director
The United States Conference of Mayor

CC: Members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
Members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee