

**STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE JAMES L. OBERSTAR, CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT
HEARING ON “PROPOSALS FOR A WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2008”
APRIL 30, 2008**

Good afternoon.

Madam Chairwoman, I am pleased that this Subcommittee is continuing its responsibility to move timely and predictable authorization bills for vital water resources studies and projects across the missions of the Corps of Engineers.

It is this Committee’s responsibility to develop studies and authorize projects to invest in our nation’s water-related infrastructure. For seven years, the nation waited for the Congress to reach agreement on a bill vital to the economic well-being of the nation, and to the lives and livelihoods of our citizens.

Upon assuming the gavels of the Committee, and the Water Resources Subcommittee, we made enactment of a water resources development act a priority, and I am pleased that, with the cooperation of our ranking members, Mr. Mica and Mr. Boozman, and our former colleague, Mr. Baker, we were able to follow through with this commitment.

Our achievement in enacting a water resources bill was truly historic.

Unfortunately, I believe that this administration has not been able to move past the override of the president's veto of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007.

We saw this in the President's budget request for fiscal year 2009, which virtually ignored new project studies and authorizations contained in the WRDA bill.

We see it as well in today's testimony of Assistant Secretary Woodley, who continues to criticize the cost of last year's bill, and requests that we "reconsider" various project authorizations and modifications that the Assistant Secretary characterizes as "unwarranted," "inappropriate," and undisciplined.

Most notable is Assistant Secretary Woodley's comment that "{we} need to invest, not simply spend."

This Committee primary focus is investment in our nation's infrastructure – and one that this administration has disagreed with on numerous occasions over the years.

Whether the issue is investment in our nation's wastewater infrastructure, investment in our nation's highways and mass transit, or investment in our nation's water related infrastructure, this administration has often rebuffed Congressional attempts to invest in our nation's infrastructure, create well-paid jobs that cannot be outsourced, and ensure the economic and environmental health and well-being of this nation for decades to come.

For example, in the 110th Congress, this administration has opposed (and often times threatened a veto) on every infrastructure investment bill that this Committee has brought to the Floor, and on which the administration has taken a position.

I am troubled by the comment that we are, somehow, failing our responsibility to investment in our nation's infrastructure.

This Committee is second to none in terms of authorizing investment in our nation's vital infrastructure projects.

Every day, we see and hear of the nation's crumbling infrastructure, and, on a bipartisan basis, are moving an agenda to repair and replace existing projects, and to plan for the next generation of roads, bridges, mass transit, airports, water transportation, and water-related infrastructure.

This Congress, we have developed legislation to increase investment in our nation's water related infrastructure, sewers, publicly owned treatment works, highways, bridges, rail, aviation, public buildings, and other economic development proposals.

Yet, in its annual budget submissions to Congress, this administration has failed to carry through on its commitment to the American people to ensure safe and reliable modes of transportation, invest in our nation's economy and environment, and ensure that the next generation will be

provided with the same opportunities that were provided to us by our predecessors.

Again, I am glad that, today, we begin the debate on a new water resources bill, and look forward to the testimony of our witnesses this afternoon.