

- **Thanks for the invitation to testify**
- **Three topics that I want to discuss today**
 - 1. Water Quality
 - 2. Transportation
 - 3. Nuclear Energy
- [1] **I represent Florida's 19th District which covers Lee and Collier County, in Southwest Florida.**
 - My district is full of environmental treasures—such as white sandy beaches, lakes, rivers, streams, creeks—not to mention the wide variety of unique aquatic specimens that call these water bodies home.
 - **The quality of water impacts my constituents and our local economy on a daily basis**
 - **Hence why water is my office's number one priority**

- **I want to make the Committee aware of a few bills that I'm leading to improve water quality in my district and around the United States**
- [1A] First, I introduced the Water Quality & Environmental Innovation Act on a bipartisan basis with Rep. Gottheimer from New Jersey.
 - This bill takes unused funding that lacks a designated purpose from EPA's Motor Vehicle and Engine Compliance Program for the purpose of issuing grants and contracts to fund projects that seek to use emerging technologies to combat water quality related-challenges.
 - **Innovative technologies may include: artificial intelligence, robotics, distributed ledger technology, eDNA, quantum, etc.**

- **This bill takes an outside-the-box approach to remedy potential water quality concerns, such as: **

- Harmful algal blooms, sea-level rise, acidification, accumulation of trash and plastics, etc.

➤ **Urge the Committee to consider this bill**

➤ [1B] Next, I previously introduced another bipartisan bill called the Combat Harmful Algal Blooms Act.

- This bill is simple: it adds “harmful algal blooms” to be eligible for major disaster funding under the Stafford Act.

- **Illustrate the economic impacts of HABs in Lee County, FL**

- Lee County Fishing industry=\$618 million value
 - Economic loss expected from a HAB=\$195 million
- Lee County Coastal Economic Output=\$11.1 billion
 - Economic loss expected from a HAB=\$3 billion.

- Lee County Property Value Near the Coast=\$19.1 billion
 - Economic loss expected from a HAB=\$3.8 billion.
 - **The economics of HABs speak for themselves**
 - **Providing federal major disaster funding to recover from severe HAB outbreaks will be vital for my district in the years to come**
 - Plus this bill doesn't automatically allocate disaster funding for *every* harmful algal bloom, but instead allows FEMA to consider allocating funding based on the individual HAB circumstance.
 - **Plus, this bill is broadly cosponsored by 15 bipartisan members of the Florida delegation. **
 - **Urge the Committee to consider this bill**
- [1C] Also to note, I'll be introducing a bill in the near future called the Convert HABs to Fuel Act—which is another bill

that takes a unique approach to combating FL's water quality challenges.

- Briefly, this bill builds upon the Army Corps.' "HABITATS" program to take aquatic algae biomass and convert such algae into alternative fuels (*biofuels*).
- As a Floridian, I welcome any opportunity to turn oranges into orange juice—and this bill incorporates a similar train of thought.
 - (CP COMMENT: PLAY ON "MAKING LEMONADE OUT OF LEMONS")
- [2A] Next, I urge the committee to consider another bipartisan bill I introduced called the Short Line Railroad Relief Act.
- There are approximately 600 short line freight railroads in the United States—most being owned & operated by small businesses.

- **Seminole Gulf Railway is FL-19's only short line**
 - **This specific short line railroad suffered "catastrophic damage" following Hurricane Ian**
- Time is of the essence after a disaster hits, and this bill authorizes a program for the DOT Secretary to issue grants & contracts to expeditiously provide much-needed capital to repair severely damaged rail infrastructure & equipment.
- **Urge the Committee to consider this bill**
- [3] Finally, I've introduced several bills relating to nuclear energy this Congress—a few that have been referred to your Committee.
- **Nuclear is the cleanest energy option in America's energy arsenal**
- **Nuclear is a bipartisan issue**

➤ [3A] Specifically, I introduced a bill that would require the development of a national strategy to deploy nuclear microreactors after natural disasters hit.

- **FL-19 knows all about natural disasters**
- **In addition to diesel generators, it would be beneficial to have the option to utilize portable microreactors as well**
- **We must proactively plan for the deployment of this next-generation nuclear technology**

➤ **Urge the Committee to consider this bill**

➤ [3B] Finally, I'd like to leave the Committee with this innovative thought:

- Across the street from this hearing room is the U.S. Capitol Power Plant.
 - This facility provides chilled water and high-temperature steam to the U.S. Capitol Complex.

- **Many don't know that this facility previously was powered by coal.**
- Today, we're seeing many coal facilities being retired (unfortunately), and there's currently a huge opportunity to revitalize retired coal facilities with advanced nuclear technology due to the compatibility of such energy infrastructure.
- Now imagine the statement Congress could make to the nuclear industry, American communities, and the world if we look into utilizing advanced nuclear reactors to power the United States Capitol.
- In fact, I have a bill that would look into the feasibility of doing just that (*called the U.S. Capitol Power Plant Retrofit Act*).
- **urge the Committee to consider this bill**

➤ Thank you Chairman Graves for considering my legislative initiatives.