

Rep. Mike Johnson WRDA Member Day Testimony

Chairman Napolitano, Ranking Member Westerman, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about important matters to my district and constituents for this year's WRDA bill. As the Committee begins its work, I respectfully ask that you keep in mind two priorities—the first is a parochial issue relating to a levee segment of the Red River in my district, and the second is a programmatic request that will increase efficiency within the Corps of Engineers.

First, I respectfully ask that the committee incorporate approximately 1.5 miles of levee in Shreveport, Louisiana into the Red River Below Denison Dam Project. This stretch of levee was constructed in the early 1960's, and it has always been operated and maintained by the Caddo Parish Levee District. It provides flood protection for nearly 30,000 residents and 200,000 acres of agricultural land. The levee has proven to be resilient, and it performed well during the historic Red River flood that occurred in June 2015. It has also been accredited by FEMA, and the levee was included in last year's Corps of Engineers Report to Congress on Future Water Resources Development. I believe it warrants inclusion into the Red River Below Denison Dam Project, and I respectfully ask that you incorporate this levee segment in this year's WRDA bill.

Next, I'd like to draw your attention to legislation that I have introduced reauthorizing Section 1043 from the 2014 WRRDA bill. As you may know, Section 1043 created two pilot programs to give greater local control over Corps of Engineers projects. Specifically, these pilot programs allow the Corps to transfer appropriations to non-federal sponsors to conduct feasibility studies and project construction.

Unfortunately, Section 1043 expired due to a technicality, but my legislation would provide a clean reauthorization for the pilot programs from FY21 through FY25.

In his testimony before this subcommittee last month, Assistant Secretary R.D. James pointed out that local control over project delivery will “help accelerate projects and create efficiencies.” Allowing greater non-federal involvement gets projects out of the day-to-day bureaucracy of the Corps. This decentralized process allows stakeholders to identify and implement lower-cost alternatives in the planning and construction phase. Furthermore, if decisions need to be made in the middle of construction of a project, non-federal stakeholders are better equipped than the Corps of Engineers to come to a timely resolution.

Section 1043 can be a useful tool as this committee seeks out ways to address the \$98 billion backlog for Corps of Engineers projects.

I'd like to respectfully urge the Committee to include these priorities in this year's WRDA bill, and thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to testify today.