

## **Opening Remarks for Clay Higgins (R-LA)**

T&I- Water Resources & Environment Subcommittee: WRDA 2024

*Oral Testimony*

January 11, 2024

- Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, subcommittee Chairman Rouzer and Ranking Member Napolitano, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the importance of this year's Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). Over the past iterations of WRDA, Louisiana has been able to obtain critical wins that protect the environment, bolster more resilient communities, and support long-term maintenance activities.
- Successful WRDA implementation is important to the country, and it is a vital and critical piece of legislation for South Louisiana. My state is home to many of the nation's largest ports, most trafficked waterways, and major hurricane protection and coastal restoration projects. Each of these assets relies on WRDA's policy guidance and funding support through the work plan for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).
- I wish to inform the committee of a few critical projects and opportunities for this year's WRDA.
- First, I would like to discuss the importance of continued funding for dredging the Calcasieu Ship Channel. We have made major strides in securing funds to maintain the channel, and we are now seeking new authorizations to deepen the channel by up to 5 feet. Doing so would provide safe under-keel clearance for larger vessels, increasing the safety of ocean-going vessels transiting the channel and generating new economic opportunities for the region.
- Further, rock jetties that were congressionally authorized on the Calcasieu River and Pass Project to protect the 400-foot-wide "inside" channel require extension in the Gulf of Mexico. Extending the jetty by 1.5 miles is necessary to increase navigational safety, protect the lives of vessels' crews, and ultimately protect the environment.

- The Calcasieu River and Pass Project and the Port of Lake Charles generates \$39.1 billion in economic activity and \$2.6 billion in federal revenue annually. It supports 108,773 direct and indirect jobs in Louisiana, as well as 158,485 jobs nationwide. It is estimated that once these new investments are realized, an additional \$74.6 billion will be contributed to the national economy and an additional \$5.24 billion annually in federal tax revenue.
- The original investment has turned the Port of Lake Charles into the 13<sup>th</sup> busiest port in the nation and serves not only as a major economic driver for Louisiana, but for the United States as a whole.
- Additionally, my office has submitted several requests aimed at advancing coastal restoration projects along the Gulf Coast and improving flood mitigation and water management strategies. These efforts are critical for coastal and inland communities across South Louisiana. We must continue to prioritize pre-disaster mitigation and make smart investments in projects that strengthen the resiliency of our communities.
- As the committee reviews requests for WRDA, I implore you to consider critical projects for Southwest Louisiana. I appreciate the time given to Members to speak before the committee to discuss the importance of the Corps and water resource projects today.