

Thank you Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson,

I am here before you today to advocate for robust funding for critical infrastructure and environmental projects of great importance to my district and our nation as a whole.

Like many across the country, Florida's Second Congressional District has constant water infrastructure needs, whether this be beach re-nourishment in Gulf County, maintenance on the Suwannee River or harbor expansion in Panama City. I'm pleased that this year, finally, the Port of Panama City was included in the Army Corps FY19 workplan. A \$4 million investment from the federal government will be an economic boon for the Florida panhandle, especially as it looks to recover from Hurricane Michael.

I support, and urge this committee to support, robust water infrastructure funding this year. However, as we move through the appropriations process, I'd like to leave you with my thoughts on some of the issues we face, and where we could do better.

Although Congress has the power of the purse, we ultimately have very little say over when or how we fund water infrastructure projects. Like many members, I spend hours during the last 6 months of the year pestering the Army Corps of Engineers and the Office of Management and Budget – trying to make them understand why a project in my district is in the best interest of the country. This process is frustratingly convoluted and opaque. While projects are typically ranked based on a cost benefit ratio (BCR) number – the Corps and OMB often disagree as to what that value is, or simply use different numbers entirely. Most of the time, a community is better off hiring a good lobbyist in Washington rather than looking to make their project more competitive. This process needs to be more clear and transparent.

Furthermore, we have severe challenges in getting water projects done in a cost efficient and timely manner in the United States. Depending on what side of the sea turtle season we are on, the U.S. dredging industry is either significantly over or significantly under capacity. Furthermore, a large, \$100 million or more dredging contract may only receive two bids – if we are going to spend that much money on something, we need a more competitive marketplace. I'd like for us to look at ways to strengthen the U.S. dredging industry, both by providing more opportunity at home and abroad. When projects in my district wait for years for just a few million dollars – or less – of federal funding, shaving just a few percentage points off the cost of a large project would go a long way. I believe that a larger and more competitive domestic industry would accomplish this.

Finally, I'd like to shift gears towards what has been for the last 60 years, and remains to be, our most pressing national environmental crisis – nuclear waste. Currently, Nuclear waste is stored in over 121 locations across 39 states, with over 3000 metric tons in my home state of Florida alone. Despite decades of research and the fact that ratepayers have contributed \$40 Billion towards its construction, Yucca Mountain remains stalled. I support the President's request to revive the project, and finally proceed with a solution to the nuclear waste problem. I urge this committee to do the same. Thank you.

