

OPENING STATEMENT
The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Chairman, Energy and Water Development Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations

Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request
for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Civil Works
and the Bureau of Reclamation
April 17, 2024

The hearing will come to order.

It is my pleasure to welcome Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Michael Connor, and Commanding General and Chief of Engineers, Lieutenant General Scott Spellmon, to discuss the fiscal year 2025 budget request for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Commissioner Camille Touton (*twotin*) to discuss the request for the Bureau of Reclamation. I am also pleased that we are joined by an alumnus of this subcommittee, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Mr. Michael Brain, from the Interior Department to discuss the request for western water. Mike, welcome back to the committee.

A key focus of this Subcommittee is making the necessary investments to manage and develop America's water resources. We have once again demonstrated our bipartisan commitment to this goal by passing a strong FY2024 bill that made robust investments in these

projects critical to public safety and our nation's economic competitiveness. I was particularly proud of the funding to advance and complete several ongoing inland waterways construction projects, including the Chickamauga Lock in my district.

The inland waterways system is vital to the American economy, moving approximately 600 million tons of cargo annually and supporting billions of dollars in economic activity. I struggle to understand why the FY2025 budget request once again proposes no funding for these projects.

Beyond the inland system, the FY2025 President's Budget continues a trend of proposed reductions to both the Corps and Reclamation. The request for the Corps totals \$7.2 billion, 17% below the enacted level, with the largest cuts proposed for Mississippi River and Tributaries and Operation and Maintenance.

In addition, the budget proposes \$1.7 billion for Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund activities, consistent with recent budgets and a reduction of nearly 38% from the enacted level. The request fails to take advantage of the tools Congress provided to promote robust investment in our nation's ports and harbors, falling nearly \$1.4 billion short of the maximum offset allowed by law.

Similarly, I am disappointed by the proposed reductions for activities critical for drought preparedness and response, water supply,

and project operations throughout the West. The President's Budget proposes \$1.6 billion for the Bureau of Reclamation and the Central Utah Project Completion Account, a reduction of 16%.

The request proposes only \$17 million for the Central Utah Project, 26% below the enacted level, continuing a downward trend. For Reclamation, the Water and Related Resources account would see a reduction of \$308 million from FY2024 levels. While I do not represent a Reclamation state, I understand the importance of Reclamation's mission in the West and believe we must do more in FY2025 to support the western communities and farmers who rely on Reclamation projects for water and power.

I appreciate our witnesses for being here today to explain your budget requests. I look forward to working together with you and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to move forward a bill that will enhance public safety and maximize the economic benefit of America's water resources.

Please ensure that the hearing record, questions for the record, and any supporting information requested by the subcommittee are delivered in final form to us no later than four weeks from the time that you receive them. Members who have additional questions for the record will have until the close of business Monday to provide them to the subcommittee office.

With that, I will turn to my Ranking Member, Ms. Kaptur, for her opening statement.