Testimony of Representative Randy Weber (TX-14)

Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies

House Committee on Appropriations

“Member Day”—April 8, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Fleischmann, Ranking Member Kaptur, Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. My name is Randy Weber, and I have the honor of representing Texas' Fourteenth Congressional District, located along the upper Gulf Coast. My district is home to seven ports, some of the largest refineries in the United States, three Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) export terminals, numerous petrochemical facilities, and other vital energy infrastructure that keeps America moving. The energy produced in my district is delivered by pipelines, trains, trucks, and cargo ships throughout the country and to our allies across the world. To keep the United States at the top of its energy game, we must invest in the critical infrastructure that powers our economy and strengthens our energy leadership. That means securing funding for key projects like Sabine-Neches Waterway Channel Improvement Project, Galveston Ship Channel Dredging, the Coastal Texas Protection and Restoration Project, the Brazos River and Colorado River Floodgates. and funding for nuclear demonstration projects. These investments will ensure the uninterrupted flow of vital energy and essential goods, keeping America competitive, resilient, and energy dominant.

Sabine-Neches Waterway Channel Improvement Project

The Sabine-Neches Waterway (SNWW) is a critical asset for American energy, military, and economic prosperity. Located in my Congressional District, it is the second-largest inland waterway along the Gulf Coast, handling over 194 million tons of cargo annually, with traffic expected to reach upwards of 210 million tons in 2026. The waterway leads in energy exports, including crude oil and LNG, and is the home to two U.S. Military Strategic Commercial Seaports: The Port of Beaumont and The Port of Port Arthur.

The SNWW requires major upgrades, including deepening the channel from 40 to 48 feet to meet the growing demand. This project is long overdue—the waterway has not had substantial improvements since 1962. This project is essential to maintaining SNWW's role in energy and military logistics. The SNWW supports approximately 375,000 direct and indirect jobs, and is expected to peak at over 500,000 jobs during the construction phase of this project. I request $173,000,000 for the SNWW Channel Improvement Project, which was authorized by Congress in 2014 and supported by President Trump in the FY 2017 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers budget.

Galveston Ship Channel Dredging

The Galveston Ship Channel (GSC) also plays a central role in energy production, economic prosperity, and national security. The GSC is a key corridor for U.S. exports, supporting the largest ethanol export terminal in the nation, as well as significant crude oil exports.

The GSC has enjoyed limited periods of unrestricted navigation over the past decade, with only six months of full access in the last 12 years. This ongoing issue of restricted depths and narrow widths threatens the safe navigation of vessels, disrupts the supply chain, and hampers economic growth. Texas International Terminals, the Port of Galveston, and other key stakeholders in the region have made, and continue to make, significant investments in the channel's infrastructure. In just three years, Texas International Terminals has quadrupled its tonnage and expects to handle 10 million tons in 2025, with projections of 20 million tons by 2027.

The Galveston Ship Channel is crucial not only for the economic health of the region but also for national defense and global trade. It is a vital conduit to move jet fuel to the Department of Defense and crude oil exports to European allies. To ensure the GSC remains a reliable, safe, and efficient channel for both economic and defense purposes, I request $39,128,400 for immediate dredging efforts. Consistent operations and maintenance funding for the GSC will help maintain this critical infrastructure, support continued growth, and solidify its place as a key asset in the global economy.

Brazos River and Colorado River Floodgates

The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) is a vital 1,300-mile-long waterway that stretches along the Gulf Coast, with the Texas portion spanning 379 miles and connecting 23 seaports. It is essential for efficient waterborne transportation and commerce. The GIWW requires infrastructure upgrades, particularly at the outdated Brazos River Flood Gates and the Colorado River Locks.

The Brazos River Flood Gates, built in the 1940s, are too small for modern vessels, leading to frequent collisions and traffic delays. The project aims to widen navigation channels and improve lock chambers to handle larger vessels, enhance safety, and prevent sediment buildup. 30 million tons of cargo, valued at $117 billion, pass through these structures annually. The project is expected to achieve a 5:1 benefit-cost ratio. I am requesting the inclusion of programmatic language to expedite the USACE's acceptance of funding from the state of Texas

for this project, which would support President Trump's goal of American energy independence and economic growth through efficient trade.

Coastal Texas Protection and Restoration Project

Storm resiliency is a major concern for Gulf Coast communities, especially after Hurricane Ike made landfall in 2008, resulting in over $30 billion in damage and $150 billion in economic disruption. The Coastal Texas Protection and Restoration Project (Coastal Spine Project) aims to protect these communities and critical energy infrastructure located along the coast from future storms.

The project focuses on flood damage reduction, environmental enhancement, and economic resiliency. It could save $2.31 billion annually by reducing flood damage and improving over 6,000 acres of coastal marsh and land to help mitigate storm surges. The project would protect 30 percent of the nation's refining capacity, 42 percent of its specialty chemical feedstock, and 80 percent of its military-grade fuel. Key to this project is the Galveston Bay Storm Surge Barrier System, which will help shield homes, businesses, and energy infrastructure. I request $40,000,000 to support this project, which was authorized in the 2022 Water Resources Development Act and is a partnership between the Texas General Land Office and the USACE.

Nuclear Demonstration Projects

American leadership in deploying small modular nuclear technologies and applications, both civil and defense, is essential for both domestic and global energy security, national security, and economic growth. Congress, specifically within this Subcommittee, has been steadfast in its commitment to accelerating the deployment of these technologies. Federal public-private partnerships have helped attract substantial private capital and project engineering expertise, driving towards demonstrations of this technology.

Rather than cede leadership in nuclear energy to countries such as China and Russia, the House Appropriations committee should continue to provide funding to enable not less than three nuclear demonstration projects, including not less than one small modular reactor deployment and the two demonstration projects already in progress within the Department of Energy's Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program. Of note, both these projects have submitted their construction applications to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which is a major step towards achieving deployment. These projects will provide this nation with two different technologies and two different applications, achieving both reliable baseload electricity and in the case of Dow and X-Energy the application of heat in the industrial manufacturing process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Subcommittee today. The impacts of these projects will be felt well beyond the boundaries of my Congressional District, and it is my sincere belief that these are essential to fulfilling President Trump's goal of energy dominance.