

Chair Napolitano, Ranking Member Rouzer, and Members of the Water Resources Subcommittee, thank you for having me here on Member Hearing Day.

Prior to this hearing, I led my colleagues, who are members of the Texas Congressional delegation, in requesting support for several priorities.

These project priorities, which are made possible for consideration by the WRDA Act, garner enormous benefits. Not only for Texas residents, but for the entire nation.

For example, the Port of Houston, in my district, is a crucial economic engine for the entire nation as the number one U.S. port in waterborne tonnage.

It provides \$801.9 billion in national economic value.

Not only is this the lifeblood of Houston, but it's a national keystone port.

A recent Coastal Texas Study Chief's report confirmed that work needs to be done to protect this essential port.

Ensuring a series of flood gates and levee systems are authorized to protect the Port of Houston Ship Channel and industrial infrastructure is vital for manufacturing, retail, agriculture, business, and military supply chains in Texas and the nation.

Studies show similar barrier systems to the one we are requesting for the Port of Houston have an almost immediate return on investment.

Hurricane Ida tested a similar barrier system in New Orleans. The system prevented a Hurricane Katrina-level surge, but it also more than paid for itself in prevented damages.

Clearly, it's in our best interest to protect the Port of Houston with flood gates and levee systems, not only for global supply chain purposes, but also for clear economic returns.

Another important economic priority is ensuring we financially protect investments like the Sabine to Galveston Bay project series.

These critical projects are already in progress and aim to reduce flooding in several southeast Texas counties.

I personally know far too well the devastating effects hurricanes and large-scale flooding have on local economies and communities.

I've seen it with my own eyes, everyone.

That's why I'm glad these projects include much-needed levees, pumps, and gates systems.

These flood-prevention tools are imperative, but it's also important we authorize a pause on interest accrual for three years to allow the most financially conscientious development of this project.

This pause in interest would allow the sponsoring agencies to be the best stewards of the project by moving forward in a cost-effective manner.

Temporarily pausing interest allows the project sponsor, Gulf Coast Protection District, to better pursue competitive funding options for non-federally funded project portions.

These project priorities requested by members of the Texas Congressional delegation benefit Texans in our home state, but also deliver major improvements to our nation.

I thank the subcommittee and the full committee for their work on these critical issues.

I urge my colleagues on the committee to include these priorities in the passage of the WRDA Act of 2022.

Thank you and I yield back.