



June 1, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of the nation's mayors, cities, and counties, we applaud the bipartisan efforts of the U.S. House of Representatives for moving forward on the Water Resources Development Act of 2018 (H.R. 8). This bill is a positive step to ensure Congress continues the two-year authorization cycle for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and we urge Congress to enact a bill by the end of the year.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) projects authorized in WRDA drive investment in navigation, flood protection and ecosystem restoration in communities. Local governments own and manage much of this infrastructure, including ports and harbors, inland waterways, levees, and dams that protect public health and safety and our natural resources. WRDA is critical to helping our communities build, maintain, and improve this critical infrastructure, while growing our national and local economies.

We thank committee leaders for including a provision to require the Army Corps to engage stakeholders in writing new and revised guidance documents. This is a good first step to strengthen the federal-state-local government consultation and collaboration process and will improve transparency and efficiency. We encourage Congress to ensure that local elected officials are included in the engagement process due to the unique perspective that they can provide on the development and financing of infrastructure projects.

We are disappointed, however, that provisions that allow the full use of funds from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) for harbor maintenance purposes were removed from the bill. The HMTF is a tax levied against importers and domestic shippers using ports and harbors in coastal and Great Lakes areas. Even though the HMTF has a large surplus, only a portion is appropriated by Congress every year for operations and maintenance of the nation's harbors. We hope to collaborate with you on a path forward to ensure that the HMTF is used for its intended purpose to improve our nation's infrastructure and secure our economic vitality.


Finally, the Senate version of WRDA includes provisions that will help communities improve our nation's drinking water and wastewater infrastructure and improve stormwater management. Whether resolved in this bill or in a separate vehicle, we look forward to working with you to address these needs in the future.

Thank you again for working in a bipartisan and bicameral manner to move this important piece of legislation. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the safety and modernization our nation's water infrastructure needs remain a top national priority. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us: Judy Sheahan (USCM) at 202-861-6775 or jsheahan@usmayors.org; Carolyn Berndt (NLC) at 202-626-3101 or Berndt@nlc.org; Julie Ufner (NACo) at 202-942-4269 or jufner@naco.org.

Sincerely,



Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director
The U.S. Conference of Mayors



Clarence E. Anthony
CEO and Executive Director
National League of Cities



Matthew D. Chase
Executive Director
National Association of Counties

cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives