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Memphis, TN

The Honorable George Flaggs
Vicksburg, MS

The Honorable Belinda Constant
Gretna, LA

Mississippi River
Cities & Towns Initiative
An Association of United States Mayors
Our River Like Our Democracy Shall Flow Unhindered 2021



March 31, 2021

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Senate Majority Co-Chair
Mississippi River Caucus
425 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Kind
House Majority Co-Chair
Mississippi River Caucus
1502 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Klobuchar and Representative Kind,

We, the Mayors of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative along the entire length of America's waterway through all ten states, write you urging support of the Andrew J. Young Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act (SMRT Act) (see attached language and Act 1-pager).

As the majority co-chairs of the Mississippi River Caucus, you are in a unique position to facilitate and champion the transformation, sustainability, and resilience of the most important working river in the world.

Now is the Time for Bold Action

Marking a new decade, new administration, and new congress the Mayors presented on March 3 a bold and intrepid legacy proposal designed to exceed all previous initiatives. In the face of persistent record disasters, deteriorating infrastructure, and cratering local budgets, Mayors are taking action to restore our corridor at scale across several economies while at the same time supporting the President's broad climate agenda.

The Andrew J. Young Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act

The centerpiece of our plan is our proposed Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together or SMRT Act. Our proposal will allow cities to transform their economies from polluted industrial to clean manufacturing and tourism. Our bill gives resources to states to secure their water quality so the \$456 billion freshwater economy of the Corridor can expand and thrive. The SMRT Act also calls for the development of a comprehensive Mississippi River Restoration Plan and the establishment of a National Mississippi River Program Office to both restore our ecology, mitigate for disasters, sequester carbon, and make our region more resilient.

The SMRT Act creates three new grant programs and establishes four on-going studies to support the grants prescribed and the scientifically informed comprehensive Mississippi River Management Plan called for in the bill (see attached Act 1-pager).

Candidly, the infrastructure and environmental services of our waterways are in a state of compromise. Typically, such a threat to the nation's domestic integrity would warrant the immediate publishing of detailed white papers from applicable agencies defining the situation.

Then, a bipartisan commission would be established to further investigate and devise solutions followed by congressional appropriations to implement the commission's recommendations. Despite the Mississippi River's incredible economic and geographic importance to the nation, no such steps proportional to impacts we are facing have been taken. The SMRT Act works to elevate the Mississippi River Corridor to the top priority it should be.

Mayors Have Secured Non-Federal Partnerships to Assist the Caucus

We are certainly not relying completely on the federal government to bring all our solutions home – we are pursuing solutions on our own with our own partnerships that can help the Caucus in this work including: a new agreement with Ducks Unlimited to deploy natural infrastructure throughout our Corridor, the establishment of environmental impact bonds to fund natural disaster mitigation projects, the development of a private-sector infrastructure investment fund, and the commissioning of a commodity-supported natural infrastructure disaster capacity study to inform all our efforts which kicked-off on March 4.

The Mississippi River Caucus can Preserve the River, Garner Climate Performance

The renewed drive by the Administration to arrive at a climate solution is something we support in a broad sense but that drive cannot leave Middle America behind. President Biden's climate agenda is something we welcome, but it will not garner lasting public support in the United States enough to ensure prolonged results beyond just our next election without interior support.

Thus, it is imperative our region show benefit from the climate agenda and add to the nation's climate performance; we can do that by pursuing a systemic approach that deploys natural infrastructure to sequester carbon and mitigates for ongoing climate impacts from Minnesota to Louisiana – the SMRT Act can be the linchpin of that effort.

Our Ask of your Support

We hope we can work with you and your legislative counsel to further perfect this proposal as well as officially request that implicated agencies offer technical drafting assistance in further developing the draft legislation attached toward introduction in both the House and Senate by April 22, 2021.

We look forward to the opportunity to work closely with your offices and the Caucus on securing the economies and ecology of our region for the future.

Very sincerely,



Hon. Sharon Weston Broome
Mayor of Baton Rouge, LA
MRCTI Co-Chair



Hon. Bob Gallagher
Mayor of Bettendorf, IA
MRCTI Co-Chair



Hon. Melvin Carter
Mayor of St. Paul, MN
MRCTI Minnesota Chair



Hon. Michael Bawden
Mayor of Riverdale, IA
MRCTI Iowa Chair



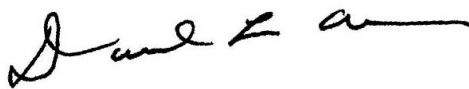
Hon. Phil Stang
Mayor of Kimmswick, MO
MRCTI Missouri Chair



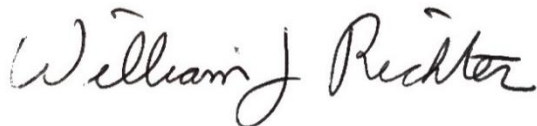
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Hon. Belinda C. Constant
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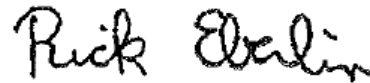
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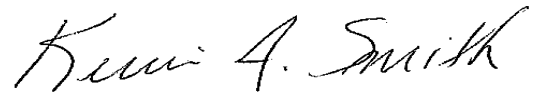
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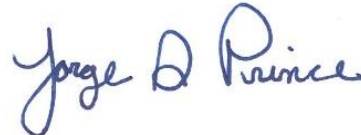
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Hon. Jorge Prince
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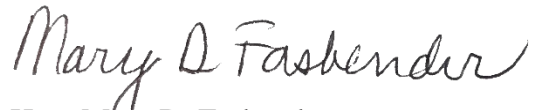
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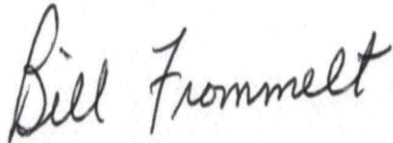
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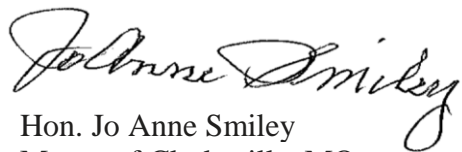
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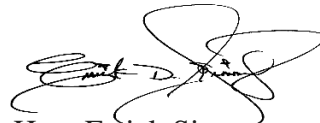
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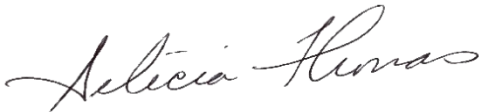
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Hon. Tom Page
Mayor of Chester, IL



Hon. Mike Matson
Mayor of Davenport, IA

cc: Senator Roy Blunt, Mississippi River Caucus Co-Chair
Congressman Rick Crawford, Mississippi River Caucus Co-Chair
Congressman Jason Smith, Mississippi River Caucus Co-Chair
Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Mississippi River Caucus Co-Chair