

Regular Session, 2011

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 163

BY REPRESENTATIVE LEGER

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To memorialize the United States Congress and the President of the United States to take such actions as are necessary to provide adequate funding for essential dredging activities on the Lower Mississippi River.

WHEREAS, dredging in the navigation channel on the Lower Mississippi River has been neglected during the record river stage levels that have impacted much of the Mississippi River Basin which has reduced the channel in Southwest Pass at the Head of Passes from a width of seven hundred fifty feet to two hundred feet and from an authorized depth of forty-five feet to forty-three feet; and

WHEREAS, actions taken by the United States Army Corps of Engineers have protected lives and property all along the entire Mississippi River, while keeping open for international commerce the two hundred fifty miles which contain the largest port area in the United States, that portion of the river from Baton Rouge to New Orleans and on to the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, shippers, pilots, and other maritime interests that depend on the Mississippi River to move cargo and keep commerce flowing are very concerned that the Corps does not have adequate resources on hand to fight the next phase of the high water event, that is, the battle to control the silt that has settled out of the water column in Southwest Pass, the New Orleans Harbor, and on the deep-draft crossings; and

WHEREAS, after the record-breaking river stage experienced during the spring of 2011, approximately sixty million cubic yards of sediment (enough to fill the Superdome thirteen times) will need to be removed from the shipping channel, as compared to the thirty-six million cubic yards of sediment confronted in a typical year, in a year where the New Orleans District of the Army Corps of Engineers is faced with inadequate funding to address this record amount of sediment; and

WHEREAS, estimates are that the New Orleans District has only about \$10 million left to fund dredging from Baton Rouge to the end of Southwest Pass through the remainder of this fiscal year and has been forced to manage dredging as if no additional funding will be received by September 30, 2011, which results in \$95 million as the best estimate of the funding shortfall based on the estimated cubic yards of sediment that will need to be removed; and

WHEREAS, emergency funding for the remainder of the federal fiscal year would enable the restoration and maintenance of this critical artery at pre-disaster levels for trade and would allow the approximately four hundred fifty million tons of international cargo valued at \$114 billion that move through Lower Mississippi River ports annually to flow unimpeded; and

WHEREAS, the supply chain of waterborne traffic that moves along this superhighway is essential to the economy of nearly forty percent of the United States with cargoes of particular importance being agricultural products, energy cargoes, and manufacturing goods; and

WHEREAS, two-thirds of United States grain exports are transported to world markets via the Mississippi River, refineries along the Mississippi River depend on unimpeded navigational access to receive petroleum shipments, the river is a critically important channel for transporting increasing coal exports, and imports including raw materials for manufacturing, such as steel, rubber, copper, aluminum, and lumber, must travel the river to reach the industrial heartland of the United States; and

WHEREAS, if the maximum draft of the Lower Mississippi River channel is reduced to forty feet or less it will negatively impact all of the above listed traffic and will hinder coastwide petroleum movements critical to the feed stock and refining process in other Gulf States; and

WHEREAS, the recovering United States economy has started to finally generate optimism with investors and shippers and the country cannot afford to have a crucial piece of our transportation infrastructure handicapped with a possible reduction of the volume of products that can be exported from the United States at the same time that President Obama, in 2010, set a goal of doubling exports by 2014; and

WHEREAS, the Corps of Engineers acknowledges that for every dollar spent to maintain the Lower Mississippi River there is a thirty-five dollar return to the United States economy, but the Corps' only hope of maintaining the channel at the necessary depth is to promptly receive additional funds for such purposes which would also allow them to respond to the increased demand for dredging with the use of additional hopper dredges; and

WHEREAS, it is important to know that failure to respond now will have severe economic impact on the entire country and could result in unprecedented price increases for the goods and services that are dependent on the river for transportation to markets; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that congress pass an emergency supplemental bill to address the high water fight along the Mississippi River including \$95 million to maintain and restore the Lower Mississippi River to its fully authorized channel dimensions of seven hundred fifty feet wide by forty-five feet deep.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby memorialize the United States Congress and the President of the United States to take such actions as are necessary to provide adequate funding for essential dredging activities on the Lower Mississippi River.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the presiding officers of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States of America and to the President of the United States and to each member of the Louisiana congressional delegation.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE