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November 29, 2021

The Honorable Michael Connor
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Connor:

As leader of the 52,000-member Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council, I would like to add our voice in urging allocation of funds for construction of the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) on the Upper Mississippi River System.

The locks on this system were built in the 1930s and '40s for steamboat-era traffic on the Mississippi and Illinois rivers and have long outlived their design life of 50 years.

The \$2.5 billion provided by passage of the bipartisan infrastructure package was intended precisely for projects like these, which create living-wage jobs, generate new revenues, and provide enormous return on investment for our communities. Each dollar invested in waterway activity results in \$1.89 in additional economic activity.

Specifically, Lock and Dam 25 on the Mississippi River and LaGrange Lock and Dam on the Illinois River stand to benefit, as they are the next two priority projects identified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Capital Investment Strategy. They have been awaiting funding since 2007. Inland navigation systems provide a strategic advantage to our manufacturing sector, and more efficient barge transportation encourages construction of additional riverside facilities, further boosting our economy.

This is truly a win-win opportunity for reducing our transportation carbon footprint, making America's farmers more competitive in the global market, and creating substantial man-hours for our skilled trades. I can think of few projects more deserving of this funding disbursement.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gary Perinar
Executive Secretary-Treasurer