

Proposals for a *Water Resources Development Act of 2022*:
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Member Day Hearing
Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher
March 16, 2022

- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
- As a former member of this Committee, I am proud of and excited about the work we did together in the *Water Resources Development Act of 2020*, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today about my community's priorities for water infrastructure investment in Houston and Harris County for the benefit of our entire region in the *Water Resources Development Act of 2022*.
- I have submitted to the Committee several priorities, including project-specific authorizations and policy changes that will build on the important work of this committee and on the historic, bipartisan *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*.
- There are two main drivers for our priorities, and I know they are the priorities of this Committee and of this Congress: (1) to support economic growth through infrastructure investment, facilitating that investment and partnerships in that effort and (2) to make our communities safer and more resilient through infrastructure investment.

- In the first category, I have asked for important policy modifications to the Houston Ship Channel Improvement Project Benefit/Cost Ratios and an O&M cost-sharing for ports and waterways that operate in depths greater than 50 feet, and mechanisms through which private industry can provide user fees to support projects like the Houston Ship Channel Improvement Project. I would be glad to discuss any of these common-sense policy changes with the committee at any time.
- In the second category, I have asked the Committee to authorize the project outlined in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Coastal Texas Study Chief's Report.
- I have previously shared some background on this project with this Committee. Texans have spent more than a decade imagining, designing, and working to address the historic events we have experienced in the recent past—from Hurricane Ike to Hurricane Harvey—with an eye toward the future, which means infrastructure resilient to floods, storms, and other threats—and not fragile in the face of these increasing risks.
- **The result of that work is the Coastal Texas Study. And the time to authorize it is now.**
- The project was developed as a result of the Texas Coastal Study—a comprehensive study led by the Corps in partnership with the Texas General Land Office to identify feasible projects that would reduce risks to public health

and the economy, restore critical ecosystems, and advance coastal resiliency.

- The Coastal Texas Study is a critical project that would stop storm surges at the coast, protecting our region—and our nation—from catastrophic damage.
- It protects the Texas coast, including the Houston region, home to more than seven million people, and home to the Houston Ship Channel and the Port of Houston—the busiest port in the country by total tonnage and home to one of the largest, if not the largest, concentration of refining and petrochemical complexes in the world.
- The economic damage to the United States in the event of a catastrophic storm surge up the Houston Ship Channel would have dire economic consequences not just in the Houston region, but across our country.
 - Essential products like gasoline, jet fuel, plastics, fertilizers, and cleaning chemicals are all made at the Port of Houston.
 - The Texas Gulf Coast is responsible for 32 percent of the refining capacity for our entire country, including an estimated 40 percent of our country’s jet fuel that we rely on for our national security.
 - The consequences of loss of that capacity cannot be overstated as it relates to our national security.

- And with recent events happening around the world, our need for energy growth and independence—as well as protection for our supply chains—is more important than ever.
- Authorizing the Coastal Texas Study and the Port of Houston policy requests is in our national security interest and our national economic interest.
- It is smart. It is timely. And it is what we need now – for Texas and for the entire country.
- Thank you for your consideration of these important requests. I look forward to working with the Committee on these projects and much more.