

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 14, 2026

The Honorable Adam Telle  
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)  
108 Army Pentagon  
Room 3E446  
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Lieutenant General William “Butch” Graham  
Chief of Engineers  
Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20314-1000

**Re:** Congressional Support for Establishment of an Inland Navigation Construction Organization (INCO) within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Dear Secretary Telle and General Graham:

We write to express our strong support for the establishment of an Inland Navigation Construction Organization (INCO) within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Headquarters. As Members of Congress with oversight responsibilities for federal infrastructure investment, we believe that the creation of this position is essential to fulfilling our shared obligations to the American taxpayer and to the long-term competitiveness of our nation’s inland waterway system.

## **I. The Strategic Importance of Inland Waterways**

The inland waterway system is a cornerstone of the American economy. These waterways move hundreds of millions of tons of commerce annually, supporting agriculture, energy production, manufacturing, and exports across the country. Aging locks and dams create bottlenecks that drive up transportation costs, disrupt supply chains, and diminish our nation’s global competitiveness. The modernization of this infrastructure is capital-intensive, spans multiple states and decades, and demands consistent, long-term oversight—an oversight structure that does not currently exist in adequate form.

## **II. A Pattern of Underperformance That Demands Structural Reform**

Despite years of sustained policy changes and congressional appropriations, the inland waterway modernization program has produced deeply troubling results:

- Only three major inland navigation projects have been completed in the past 28 years.
- Numerous ongoing projects have experienced significant cost overruns and schedule delays, some extending a decade or more beyond original projections.

These failures are not primarily a product of insufficient funding—they reflect a structural absence of coordinated program-level management. Inland navigation projects span multiple river systems, USACE Districts and Divisions, and states, yet they continue to be managed as isolated, competing individual efforts rather than as a single national program. This fragmentation leads to inconsistent priorities, inefficient use of Inland Waterway Trust Fund and General Fund dollars, and fragmented communication with Congress.

**III. Why the Inland Navigation Construction Organization Is the Right Solution**

We support the creation of an Inland Navigation Construction Organization—modeled on USACE’s successful management of other large portfolios, such as dam safety—to manage inland navigation modernization as a cohesive national program. The INCO would pursue three core objectives that this body consistently seeks from USACE:

1. Clear Communication – Unified, consistent messaging on funding priorities, project status, and long-term investment needs.
2. Program-Level Oversight – Regular in-progress reviews that identify cost and schedule risks before they require congressional intervention.
3. Defined Accountability – A single designated Inland Program Manager serving as the point of accountability for the entire inland navigation modernization effort.

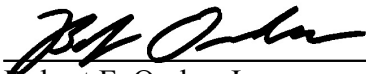
Critically, the INCO does not remove project delivery authority from USACE Districts or Divisions, does not limit Congress’s authority over appropriations, and does not require new statutory authority for the USACE to begin implementation. It reorganizes how existing responsibilities are coordinated—a structural improvement that is long overdue.

**IV. Conclusion and Request for Action**


Inland waterways are national infrastructure assets that require national-level coordination. Managing them project-by-project has contributed to decades of delays, cost growth, and inconsistent results. The time has come to treat the inland waterway modernization program as what it is: a single, interconnected national program that demands unified leadership and strategic oversight.

We respectfully urge both of you to move forward with the establishment of the Inland Navigation Construction Organization without delay. We stand ready to support this effort through the legislative and appropriations process and look forward to your response outlining a plan and timeline for implementation.

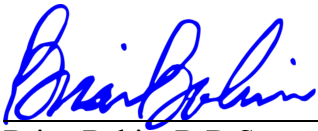
Sincerely,

  
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Robert F. Onder, Jr.  
Member of Congress

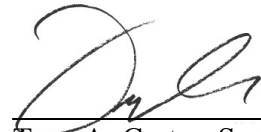
  
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Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress

  
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Troy E. Nehls  
Member of Congress

  
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Mike Ezell  
Member of Congress



Brian Babin, D.D.S.  
Member of Congress



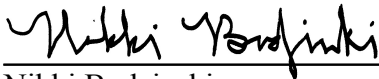
Troy A. Carter, Sr.  
Member of Congress



Bruce Westerman  
Member of Congress



Brad Finstad  
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Nikki Budzinski  
Member of Congress



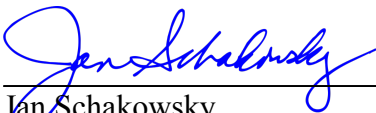
David J. Taylor  
Member of Congress



James Comer  
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



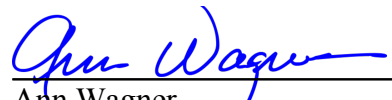
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Eric Sorensen  
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress



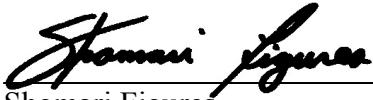
Ann Wagner  
Member of Congress



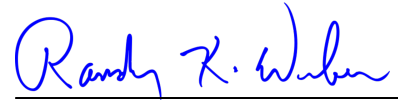
Angie Craig  
Member of Congress



Barry Moore  
Member of Congress



Shomari Figures  
Member of Congress



Randy K. Weber, Sr.  
Member of Congress



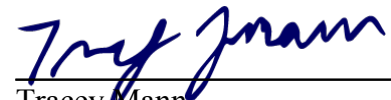
Mariannette J. Miller-Meeks, M.D.  
Member of Congress



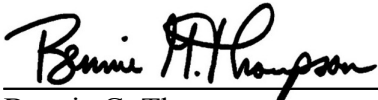
Mark Alford  
Member of Congress



Mike Bost  
Member of Congress




Tracey Mann  
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



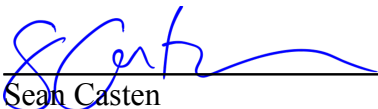
Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



Charles J. "Chuck" Fleischmann  
Member of Congress



Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



Randy Peenstra  
Member of Congress



Mary E. Miller  
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson  
Member of Congress

*Danny K. Davis*

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Member of Congress

*Mike Quigley*

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Member of Congress

*Wesley Bell*

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Member of Congress

*David Kustoff*

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David Kustoff  
Member of Congress

*Mark B. Messmer*

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Member of Congress