

on the struggles going on in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Iran, and elsewhere in this critical and dangerous part of the world.

The yearning for freedom is a universal one, but getting there has never been easy. The Egyptians, Syrians, Tunisians, and others have taken the first step towards taking their societies back. We must stand ready to help, and we must be prepared for a long and uneven journey.

THE WATER RESOURCES REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2013

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I come from the great State of Michigan, also known as the Great Lakes State, and I have lived my entire life along the shores of this national treasure. For those of us in Michigan and the other Great Lakes States, the Great Lakes are not just a source of much of our drinking water or a place that we go to enjoy their natural beauty or recreational opportunities or where so many work and make a living; they are central to our very identity. That is why I have made the protection of the Great Lakes a principal advocacy during all of the years that I have been in public service.

The Great Lakes actually represent fully one-fifth of the freshwater drinking supply on the entire planet. They provide the drinking water supply to tens of millions in our Nation and millions more in Canada as well. They are also vital to our economy. Over 160 million tons of commercial cargo is shipped on the Great Lakes. This commerce supports over 227,000 jobs and contributes over \$33 billion to the economy.

The recreational aspect of the Great Lakes also builds our economy. Recreational boating on the Great Lakes supports over 100,000 jobs and \$16 billion in economic activity. The secondary effect of all of that means an additional 244,000 jobs and \$19 billion in additional economic activity. Of course, that includes boat manufacturers, marinas, charter operators, and other businesses as well. So, a healthy Great Lakes system is not only important to our economy in Michigan or the Great Lakes States, it is important for the entire Nation.

Today, unfortunately, the use of those waters is threatened by our inability to maintain our ports, our channels, and our harbors. A decade—we have had actually a decade—of below normal water levels and very limited or uncoordinated Federal funding for harbor dredging and infrastructure repair has dramatically curtailed shipping, and it has made, actually, some of our recreational harbors almost inaccessible. In fact, this year, many of our recreational harbors were really in crises as low water levels made the need for dredging vital to the

economic survival of so many communities.

We as a Nation, Mr. Speaker, must recognize the importance of the Great Lakes and give this natural wonder the properly coordinated support that it needs. That is why I have joined with several of my Michigan colleagues—BILL HUIZENGA and DAN BENISHEK—to introduce the Great Lakes Navigation System Sustainability Act. Our legislation is supported by the Great Lakes Maritime Task Force, the Great Lakes Metro Chambers of Commerce, the Lakes Carriers Association, the American Great Lakes Port Association, the Great Lakes Small Harbors Coalition, the National Marine Manufacturers Association, the United States Great Lakes Shipping Association, and the Great Lakes Commission, as well as the Great Lakes Governors Association.

I am very pleased that the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, BILL SHUSTER, worked with us to include important provisions of that legislation in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act, also known as WRRDA, which we will be voting on in this House later on today.

The most important of these provisions will establish the Great Lakes Navigational System and require the Army Corps of Engineers to look at the Great Lakes system in its entirety rather than looking at it port by port when they are thinking about dredging and maintenance. This would really end the practice of pitting one port in the Great Lakes against another, and, instead, it focuses on the interdependence of all of them.

The WRRDA bill also helps recognize our recreational harbors by providing 10 percent of all the funds authorized by the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to be directed to recreational harbors. This type of funding will allow recreational harbors across the Great Lakes to have another opportunity for needed dredging support, places like Port Huron, Lexington, Port Sanilac, Harbor Beach, Port Austin, Sebawaing, and many others—those are just in my district—but there are so many others throughout the entire basin as well.

Mr. Speaker, if you travel to the State of Michigan and visit the shores of the Great Lakes, you will find the magnificence of what we call “pure Michigan.” But, as possessive as those of us from Michigan are of the Great Lakes, we also recognize that they are “pure American,” so this incredible natural wonder deserves the recognition and protection from our entire Nation. Today, we can take a very important step forward in the protection of the Great Lakes, our magnificent Great Lakes, by passing the WRRDA bill.

I certainly urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

THE WATER RESOURCES REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2013

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MURPHY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to submit for the RECORD a summary of the transcript of the bipartisan briefing I recently hosted along with my good friend from the great State of Florida, TREY RADEL, on the crucial environmental issues facing our waterways in Florida. During a time of the most discouraging examples of partisan gridlock, we were able to come together with many people on both sides of the aisle to work toward solutions to the ongoing crisis in our waterways.

There is no denying that an environmental crisis is taking place up and down the Indian River Lagoon. Record-breaking rainfall, out-of-date engineering, and urban and agricultural runoff are all damaging our waterways. To bring attention to this important matter, we invited community members who have been directly impacted by the water so polluted with bacteria and toxic algae that health officials told people to avoid contact with the water. In an area where the economy depends on water for our local livelihood, this pollution is having devastating effects.

Members of our community took great lengths to make their voices heard in Congress. Many flew up here, others fundraised to take a bus, using money out of their own pocket to make sure that Washington heard how they have been directly impacted by polluted and toxic waterways.

Despite the government shutdown and the inability of any Federal agency officials to attend, we were pleased to see so many engaged constituents in the room with us as we spoke to many Members who have important leadership roles in the House itself—the Appropriations Committee, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and many among the Florida delegation.

At the briefing, we not only discussed the problems but the solutions, both short-term and long-term, that can only come from a mutual understanding of the problem and cooperation of local, State, and Federal entities. Solutions such as completing Everglades restoration projects like the Indian River Lagoon-South project and funding the completion of C-44 components of this project as soon as possible to grant relief to the already battered St. Lucie Estuary are critical. We must also fight for quick and effective repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike that will allow for the safe retention of more water in Lake Okeechobee.

There was also broad agreement on the importance of passing WRRDA so we can move forward with Everglades restoration efforts that will benefit all of our communities. Additionally, WRRDA will streamline processes so ongoing and future projects can advance more efficiently and expeditiously.