



[Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative](#)

For Immediate Release: July 28, 2020

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Audio recording of the briefing will be available after 12 pm Central Time

Mayors in Heartland Battleground States Implore Senate to Act on Stimulus as Pandemic Surge Worsens

July 28, 2020, La Crosse, WI – Mayors of the [Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative](#) (MRCTI) in crucial 2020 states like Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa pleaded for action from the U.S. Senate today to pass a stimulus package that includes revenue replacement for local governments, resources for testing, and additional PPE assistance for schools, intense heat response, and hurricane preparations in the face of an on-going COVID-19 surge.

Mississippi River Mayors Banded Together Early in the Pandemic Resulting in More Capacity

Mayors from Minnesota to Louisiana as early as March began working together to help each other control the pandemic better by collectively partnering with donors such as Guardian Angels for PPE, solidifying global partnerships with industries and organizations to gain access to more resources and expertise for pandemic response.

“Our working with each other throughout our entire region has paid-off. We’ve now accumulated over 75,000 units of PPE equipping our cities with masks, body coverings, and now thermometers. We’ve also partnered with technical experts to better access federal resources. As a region we can better respond to the pandemic than individually. But, this fight can’t go-on forever without national assistance,” explained **Mayor Bob Gallagher of Bettendorf, IA** and Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative.

COVID-19 is Persistent and Local Budgets Have Been hit Worse Than During the Financial Crisis

Local government budgets have been stretched to the limit fighting the pandemic. Cities in the ten-state Mississippi River Corridor have revenues down from 10 to 30 percent for the year which leaves less and less facility to tackle the coronavirus especially if the current surge continues.

“La Crosse County has the largest case count in western Wisconsin at this time. We are working to contain the contagion, but our depleted revenue complicates our efforts. Also, if we are going to get our economy fully reopened, we need to have the capacity to test the healthy, not just the exposed and symptomatic,” counseled **Mayor Tim Kabat of La Crosse, WI** and Wisconsin chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative. “My state originally peaked on May 28 with 646 new cases reported that day. We more than doubled that on July 24 alone.”

“Like communities across our nation, this enduring pandemic continues to challenge all of us,” said **Mayor Melvin Carter of St. Paul, MN**. “As we plan for an anticipated budget deficit, federal stimulus funds are critical in helping us meet the many needs our community faces during this crisis.”

Where the Surge is Worst, Mayors are Taking Action Themselves

Southern Louisiana became an epicenter of the pandemic in April with a sustained recovery period through May and June. Now, the surge expanding across the country has brought a new spread of contagion to the Delta including Mississippi and Louisiana topping the worst levels seen in April by several hundred cases all in the midst of a very active hurricane season.

“Here in Mississippi, we’re seeing cases rise to past double what we were seeing in April, May, or June. It didn’t take long to climb from 400 cases a day to 1,600 and it is the western side of the state seeing the fastest rise in newly reported cases. In fact, I just placed a new order with MRCTI for additional masks and thermometers to assist my city with response. We got ahead of this before and think we can again, but now cases are rising much faster and we’ve been fighting the pandemic longer with a greater toll,” said **Mayor George Flaggs of Vicksburg, MS** and Mississippi Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative.

“We started testing early and assembled the facilities completely on our own,” explained **Mayor Sharon Weston Broome of Baton Rouge, LA** and Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative. “But, now we’re seeing testing wait times climb to as much as ten days. If we’re expected to open schools in the fall, have capacity in place for a major hurricane, and lift it all with a third less revenue, then we need action on this stimulus now and it has to get funds to main street. We only had one city along the entire Mississippi River qualify for direct funding from the CARES Act.”

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Audio from this morning's press conference will be available after 12PM Central Time today, please contact Jim Gwinner at jgwinner@LS2group.com for that file.

Mayors attending the MRCTI press call and available for media inquiries:

- Hon. Bob Gallagher – City of Bettendorf, IA & MRCTI Co-Chair
- Hon. Sharon Weston Broome – City of Baton Rouge, LA & MRCTI Co-Chair
- Hon. Tim Kabat – City of La Crosse, WI
- Hon. Melvin Carter – City of St. Paul, MN
- Hon. George Flaggs – City of Vicksburg, MS

Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative ([MRCTI](#)) is a coalition of 97 mayors from across the Mississippi River Corridor which spans along ten states from Minnesota to Louisiana. The Mississippi River provides drinking water to more than 20 million people and 50 cities. More than 40 percent of the nation's agricultural commodity output moves on the Mississippi River. The River's resources support 1.5 million jobs and create \$496.7 billion in annual revenue.