

For Immediate Release

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**Mayors of the Mississippi River
Voice Warnings on Prolonged Absence from the Paris Agreement
*Cite Negative Impacts on American Prominence in Commodity Exports***

(June 1, 2017)— Mayor Chris Coleman (St. Paul, MN) and Mayor Belinda Constant (Gretna, LA) Co-Chairs of the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI), joined mayors of rural and urban communities from throughout the Mississippi River Corridor in extolling the benefits of the Paris Agreement on U.S. exports.

“We are very disappointed the President has decided on this course of action. The Mississippi River Basin allows our nation to lead the global commodities market. Now, we have ceded that status to other nations,” said Mayor Chris Coleman of St. Paul and MRCTI Co-Chair.

In a letter this week, mayors from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana warned the White House that If the U.S. pulls-out of the Agreement, the rest of the countries who remain will be moving forward unilaterally with carbon pricing through taxes or trading systems that could increase the cost of U.S. exports.

“The real danger here is the U.S. will not be at the negotiating table for how high these taxes will be, or what the structure will look like once imposed. We will simply be subject to the decisions of other countries. This is a detriment to American prominence,” warned Mayor Jay Hollowell, Mayor of Helena-West Helena, AR.

Mayors cautioned that the impacts could be felt at home. Waterways and ports in the Mississippi River ten-state corridor move \$164.6 billion in agricultural products to U.S. and foreign markets. The vast majority of this volume is for export.55 to 70 percent of all U.S. exported corn, soy, and wheat move on the Mississippi River, majority of which is exported creating a trade surplus for the nation.

“The commodities economy is essential to us here in Louisiana,” stated Belinda Constant, Mayor of Gretna, LA and Co-Chair of MRCTI whose city resides next to the Port of New Orleans. “Louisiana has 32 ports, including 6 deep-water ports, 20 percent of all U.S. imports and exports pass through Louisiana’s ports. Waterways and ports in my state support over 281,000 jobs and add \$47.7 billion to the state’s economy,” said Mayor Constant.

“Tennessee moves \$6.3 billion in agricultural products to US and foreign markets. The Port of Memphis is second on the Mississippi and fifth nationwide. Memphis just won a US DOT Marine Highway Grant to develop a container-on-barge export line from Memphis to Baton Rouge. This line will only work if the US maintains cost competitive access to the global supply chain and foreign markets,” explained Mayor Jim Strickland of Memphis, Tennessee.

“The Mississippi River Basin is the most agriculturally productive zone on Earth supplying more commodities trade by volume than any other river basin in the world. This trade status is made possible through unfettered access to international markets that may close to us or become prohibitively expensive to retain our surplus standing,” warned Mayor Roy Buol of Dubuque, IA and MRCTI Immediate Past Co-Chair.

Mississippi River Mayors called on the President to work toward an efficient reentry into the Agreement so commodity advantages could remain intact. Mayors are also considering subnational partnerships that work to keep the Mississippi River Corridor sustainable and competitive on the international stage.

MRCTI is an effort to bring national attention back to the Mississippi River—America’s most critical natural asset—and spearhead a new level of regional cooperation to make it more sustainable. As the ecological linchpin to the 31-state Mississippi River Basin, the River is responsible for creating nearly \$500 billion worth of U.S. GDP; providing drinking water for more than 20 million; transporting 40 percent of our nation’s agricultural output; and directly supporting 1.5 million jobs and millions more indirectly.

More information at www.mrcti.org.

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