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Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman's courtesy for yielding me this time, and I noticed with pride her reference to the Sacramento situation. We worked with Bob Matsui on that for years, and he provided great leadership. I appreciate the gentlewoman's continued efforts, and I am pleased this bill looks like it may help move that project forward. It is a priority for not only California, but also the Nation.

I am also pleased to serve under the leadership of the gentleman from Tennessee (Chairman DUNCAN). I truly believe that the work of the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. Duncan) is developing a path for a new direction for the Corps of Engineers and water resources.

This has been an arduous, difficult task in our Chamber and the other Body, dealing with a wide variety of issues and I salute him, our ranking member, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. Eddie Bernice Johnson) and her predecessor, Mr. Costello, because I know they have spent long, hard hours bringing forth a product that will do much good for America.

I come today in support, however, of one amendment which I appreciate being made in order in this rule which will enable the Chamber to take a step back and look at the largest, most expensive navigation project in America's history. I think it is important that we take that careful look, because frankly, there are grave questions about this project.

Today, for instance, I note yet another in a flood, if I may use the term, of editorials from around the country. This from the Chicago Tribune entitled ``Reality on the River'' that calls into question the wisdom of this massive investment.

WRDA would authorize $1.8 billion to expand seven locks on the upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. This would be the most expensive project for navigation in our Nation's history. It will take 10 to 15 percent of the Corps construction funding for years, indeed decades.

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. Matsui) needs to be concerned about this if we are going to fund what she wants. The gentlewoman from West Virginia (Mrs. Capito) has water resource needs that are of significance to her constituents, which are at risk if we are going to make this massive investment.

For order of magnitude, Members are familiar with the ``Big Dig'' highway project in Massachusetts. This is an order of magnitude five times larger than the Big Dig when applied to water.

When the Corps is facing a $58 billion backlog of projects right now and a construction budget of less than $2 billion per year, we need to look at this very, very carefully; especially since the economic justification of this project is not just shaky, but frankly, it looks to be flawed.

Studies by the National Academy of Science and the Congressional Research Service, as well as the recent history of traffic on the Mississippi, shows that there is not an increase in barge traffic that would justify it. In fact, for the last 20 years, barge traffic has been flat, and for the last 13 years it has declined. It has declined more than a third from 1992. As barge traffic has declined, we have nonetheless spent almost a billion dollars rehabilitating the locks on the river. This has been controversial from the start. This project helped launch our Corps reform efforts. Members of this Chamber may remember in the year 2000, the Corps of Engineers fired the lead economist, Donald Sweeney, because he claimed Corps officials had ordered him to ``cook the books,'' to underestimate how much was going to be shipped.

Well, he applied for whistleblower protection. In fact, the Army's inspector general confirmed that the Corps had manipulated the documents. Unfortunately, the Corps has not adequately fixed the process.

Several studies from the National Academy of Science and the Congressional Research Service show that the model is still flawed. In fact, the most recent study from the National Academy of Science in 2004 points out that despite their efforts, ``The study contains flaws serious enough to limit its credibility and value within the policy-making process.''

Now, I want to make clear I am not here today to kill this project. The gentleman from Arizona (Mr. Flake) and I are offering an amendment that simply says if this project is justified, then it goes forward. Our amendment just says that the minimum justification, 35 million tons of barge traffic, is the lowest justification that would make this economically viable. They have 3 more

years to hit the target. Maybe there has been an aberration in the last 20 years, so they have 3 more years. If in the course of the next 3 years there still is no increase, then certainly we should not be spending almost $2 billion.

This amendment does not delay the project. Testimony before our committee indicated it will take 4 to 5 years even with optimal funding for planning for this to move forward.

Not only would the amendment not delay the project at all, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. Flake) and I recommend that there be immediate activities in the basin to be able to move barges more efficiently. Under our amendment, people who ship will get help immediately. It will make it easier for barge traffic to go up and down. It will make it easier to hit their projections. It would seem we are doing them a favor.

Bear in mind that this is a time of great change in the upper Midwest. Their products are going north to Canada on rail, south to Mexico on rail under NAFTA. They are actually exporting less because they are using product for the domestic market for things like ethanol and for food for animals. It is not likely that there is going to be a need for increased river capacity in the future. And it is not about shifting to trucks. This product is already moving on rail, going north and south, going west; and we are not taking away the barges in the Mississippi River. They will still be there.

I strongly urge my friends to look at this, the largest project for navigation in our history, to do things now under our amendment that will help the barge traffic, that are cheaper and more cost effective. Every Member has a stake in this, and I urge your consideration.