

# CONNECTING AND COMPETING:

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO  
INFRASTRUCTURE IN 2023



# Connecting and competing:

## An insider's guide to Infrastructure in 2023

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# Paving the road to prosperity for Mississippi



By Governor Tate Reeves

Infrastructure made Mississippi. In fact, the greatest natural transportation highway in the world, the Mississippi River, gave us our name. And transportation continues to drive our success today. That's why Mississippi is making massive investments in infrastructure. That's because safe roads, strong bridges, and

**By improving our infrastructure, Mississippi can attract even more people to experience all that the Hospitality State has to offer.**

effective railroads help lay the foundation for a strong economy and a better quality of life for Mississippians. These key assets bind our state and facilitate travel, commerce, and more.

Earlier this year I called for a new and historic state investment in Mississippi's infrastructure. Together with the Mississippi Legislature, we delivered on that proposal. I was proud to sign over \$2 billion in infrastructure and transportation investments into law.

This legislation invested \$1.4 billion in the Mississippi Department of Transportation. The appropriation is earmark-free and ensures that the department has the flexibility needed to invest in the most effective transportation and construction projects across the state.

We also invested additional funding to tackle a range of major road, bridge, port, rail, and airport improvements across Mississippi. The legislation I signed commits \$450 million for capacity projects across the state, \$100 million for emergency road and bridge repairs, \$30 million for new port, airport, and rail improvements, and \$40 million to pull down additional federal matching funds for projects.

These improvements are not only a

commitment to the people of Mississippi to deliver the roads they deserve, but a tangible economic investment for our state.

As governor, one of my key responsibilities is recruiting new businesses and jobs to the state. When I speak with business leaders from across the country, I often get two questions.

airports, we want to bolster assets across every corner of our state so that we can make Mississippi even more competitive for the jobs of the next fifty years. That's what Mississippi is doing.

Companies are taking notice of what's happening in Mississippi and the investments we've made are already paying dividends. Just last year, we brought in a

to enjoy our beautiful Gulf Coast or a family taking a cross-country road trip to the Grammy Museum in Cleveland, better transportation assets mean improved travel experiences and more visitors as well.

In the long term, these investments will not only help Mississippi pave roads but pave the pathway to genera-



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Shipping Crane at the Mississippi Port Authority, Gulfport, Mississippi.

The first is about the quality of our workforce, which gives me a prime opportunity to brag about the work ethic of our people, the quality of their character, and how Mississippians still value a hard day's work. Thanks to them, our unemployment rate is at 3.5% - a record low for our state.

The second question is about speed to market. They want to know how quickly we can get shovels in the ground and get products moving to consumers. We already have sites that are ready for private investment. We now have road expansions and bridge, rail, and port improvements to make the answer even more clear.

From railroads to ports, from roads to

record \$6 billion in new private capital investment. Every single dollar represents investment in new jobs and better salaries for Mississippians. At the end of the day, that's what it's all about.

I've often said that one of the biggest challenges Mississippi faces is convincing people to visit just once. If we can get someone to visit our state just one time, they love what they see, they love the people they meet, and they want to come back again and again.

In September 2021 alone, visitors spent \$1 billion here. By improving our infrastructure, Mississippi can attract even more people to experience all that the Hospitality State has to offer. Whether it's someone flying in

tional economic prosperity and keep our kids and grandkids here. The two most powerful words in the English language are "You're hired." And today in Mississippi, there's an incredible amount of hiring happening. Our historic infrastructure investments are a big reason why.

*Tate Reeves is the 65th Governor of Mississippi. He delivered the largest tax cut in Mississippi history, returning over half a billion dollars to taxpayers. In his first term as governor, Mississippi reached record-low unemployment rates, collected billions in excess revenue, and achieved the highest ever high school graduation rate.*

# Infrastructure in the skies: Supporting a modern National Airspace System



**By Rebecca Spicer,  
Airlines for America**

**E**very single day, each of us relies on our nation's infrastructure in some way – big or small: the roads we drive, the bridges we cross, the shipping channels receiving cargo, and the National Airspace System (NAS) airlines use to safely fly us to destinations across the country and around the world. In fact, U.S. airlines carry 2.3 million passengers and over 65,000 tons of cargo to more than 220 countries daily, all while driving 5% of U.S. GDP.

Two years ago, Congress passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the bipartisan infrastructure law. It comes as little surprise that congressional districts across the country value investment in asphalt, concrete, and other components of what we traditionally think of as “brick and mortar” infrastructure. However, we all must value—and invest in—two additional components, human infrastructure and technology infrastructure.

Nearly 800,000 workers in the U.S. airline industry make it possible to get air travelers to their destinations safely. Last year alone, airlines helped kick-start 50,000 new careers. Our passenger airlines currently boast their largest workforce since 2001. We are proud that these positions are high-quality, career track jobs.

U.S. airlines recognize the importance of securing a pipeline of new employees to accommodate growing demand for air travel across the country and around the globe.

Our growing workforce is the result of sustained aggressive and strategic hiring campaigns over the past of couple years. Airlines understand the importance of investing in our people, which is why we offer competitive pay (37% higher than the average private sector



employee) and generous benefits.

To attract new employees, A4A carriers have invested in new pilot training and enhanced recruitment efforts—such as partnering with universities, tapping into communities to increase diversity and implementing programs to address financial hurdles.

Our workers are the backbone of the industry and the heart of our operations. They also are the face of your next trip, ensuring your safety from takeoff to touchdown.

flight status, baggage tracking, food and beverage selection, entertainment and more.

These investments have been supplemented by U.S. airports' own investments, supported predominantly by rents, landing fees, parking fees, concessions, ticket taxes and other revenues generated from airlines and their customers.

Airlines do not operate alone in the NAS. Our airspace is utilized by general aviation, military exercises, and space launches. FAA air traffic controllers

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**It is time to expand our perception of infrastructure beyond brick-and-mortar buildings and understand that investments in people and technology are also critical infrastructure in modern times.**

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Technology also plays an important and transformational role in our aviation system and allows airplanes to fly safely and more efficiently, impacting nearly every aspect of operations, from flight dispatchers optimizing routes to pilots landing on the runway.

U.S. airlines are estimated to spend a record \$25 billion on aircraft, ground equipment, facilities and technology like mobile apps and kiosks to better communicate with customers about their flight and allow a touchless experience.

More than 60% of flyers used mobile devices for boarding passes last year alone. Travelers are encouraged to use touchless technology for check-in,

(ATC) keep vigilant over the skies and logistically manage every taxi, takeoff and landing for airlines and other operators.

Unfortunately, the FAA's system has been squeaking by for years as air traffic control modernization efforts have not kept pace with technological advancement and in many cases run past deadlines and over budget. For example, many FAA control facilities still use the same paper strip system of the 1970s. In addition, the FAA's traffic flow management and planning tool, the Traffic Flow Management System, is outdated and cannot support capabilities moving forward. The FAA is struggling to maintain and sustain legacy ATC systems

while operationalizing modernization priorities consistently lack the attention and investment necessary to truly modernize our aviation system not only to meet the needs of existing users but also the demands of the future.

While the lagging modernization efforts may be the topic of “behind the scenes” discussions on most days, recent incidents have provided public examples of the consequences of simply maintaining and sustaining legacy systems. On January 11, 2023, the FAA issued the first nationwide ground stop since 9/11 due to an outage of its Notice to Air Missions (NOTAM) system. Airlines and airports struggled to manage all the compacted demand and recovering diversions. This disruption came on the heels of an ATC system failure in South Florida on January 2nd and put a national spotlight on the dire need to update the lagging technological infrastructure being used by the FAA, the nation's federal regulator of the NAS.

Funding levels for FAA capital programs have been stagnant for more than a decade and have not kept up with inflation, and ATC staffing shortages have had a direct impact on consumers. For example, because the crucial ATC facility responsible for managing the flow of arrival, departure, and enroute traffic in the New York area was only staffed at 54%, in March, the FAA was forced to ask airlines to cut 10% of their operations in that area. Airlines have complied in order to keep the system as safe as possible, but regrettably this comes at a cost to the flying public by arbitrarily trimming schedules ahead of the busy summer travel season. Aviation consumers deserve a better return on their investment.

Our country and world depend too much on commercial aviation to be held back by these challenges. It is time to expand our perception of infrastructure beyond brick-and-mortar buildings and understand that investments in people and technology are also critical infrastructure in modern times.

We are encouraged that Congress agrees, and we remain hopeful this year's FAA reauthorization will make meaningful investments in our national airspace infrastructure so we can continue to operate not only the safest airspace in the world but also the most efficient.

.....  
*Rebecca Spicer is Senior Vice President of Communications at Airlines for America (A4A), which promotes safety, security and a healthy U.S. airline industry. A4A works collaboratively with airlines, labor, Congress, the Administration and other groups to improve aviation for the traveling and shipping public.*



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# The farm bill can bring modern infrastructure to rural America



By U.S. Sen. John Boozman

**T**he past few years have not been easy on rural America. Trade wars, record-high inflation, breakdowns in supply chains and extreme weather events have taken a toll on our rural communities.

But nothing tested the resiliency of America's rural communities quite like the pandemic did.

Just ask any parent living in rural America about the challenge of schooling their children from home without internet access.

Or ask the administrators of rural hospitals, already struggling to keep their doors open, who continued to serve their community while navigating the unprecedented effects of the pandemic.

Even the supply chain issues we all faced hit rural America harder. It is difficult to find necessities when you only have one grocery store within a 20-mile radius.

These challenges make it harder to stop an exodus that was already underway. Americans had already been leaving rural communities in large numbers for employment opportunities and the modern services and conveniences big metropolitan areas offer.

I've seen this firsthand in Arkansas, where over half of our 75 counties lost population in the last census. This trend is playing nationwide, with 53% of counties across the country losing populations.

One reason our rural populations are in decline is that many of these communities simply do not have the infrastructure to provide a good quality of life for their residents to remain.

In the past, we would talk about infrastructure in terms of the three "r's" — roads, rails and runways. Those days are gone. It is simply not enough anymore. While the three "r's" certainly are vital



**Infrastructure plans for the 21st century must also incorporate broadband internet access and improvements to water systems.**

to a region's growth, infrastructure plans for the 21st century must also incorporate broadband internet access and improvements to water systems.

In the 1930s, when high costs made electricity non-existent in rural America, Congress responded by passing the Rural Electrification Act of 1936. We need a similar sweeping approach to deploy broadband and other modern infrastructure in our rural communities now.

Rural Americans need access to quality high-speed broadband as quickly as possible. With more than a hundred federal broadband programs, it is critical that resources are targeted to the millions of households who are truly unserved through the development of accurate mapping data. The opportunity cost of leaving rural Americans behind in the digital divide without access to telehealth, online learning, e-commerce, precision agriculture and more, is simply too great to ignore.

Similarly, many rural communities lack safe and reliable drinking and wastewater services. The cost to build, maintain and operate these facilities are very high, and small communities have more difficulty affording them due to lack of population density and lack of economies of scale. When functioning drinking water and wastewater facilities are scarce, a community's chances of attracting new private investment are slim.

Communities that lack modern infrastructure are at risk of losing hospitals, schools, businesses and, in turn, residents. Once those leave, the turn-back dollars—essential to growth—go with them, and they don't come back easily. It is a vicious cycle.

This is why it is so important for Congress to pass a new farm bill. While discussions on the farm bill often focus on the agriculture safety net and nutrition programs, the rural development programs within the farm bill bring everything from modern and clean water systems to reliable broadband connections to our rural communities.

When it comes to rural infrastructure, the farm bill isn't our only tool in the toolbox, but it is certainly a major one. By passing the farm bill, we can ensure the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development mission area can provide loans and grants that can essentially build a community from the ground up. The range of assistance USDA offers is vast—from funding for water, sanitation, electricity, and

broadband infrastructure to loans for small businesses, financing for cooperatives and grants for community facilities.

These programs are the gateway for new businesses, new facilities, and importantly, new jobs to come to these regions that have been passed over for far too long. Our rural communities must have the modern infrastructure necessary to attract and retain talent. Farm bill-funded programs are key to that effort.

When one region of the country suffers, the whole nation does. We cannot leave rural America behind. Infrastructure investments across rural America will allow new businesses, with new well-paying jobs, to flourish around our family farms, ranches and forests that provide our food, fuel and fiber. We all win with a vibrant rural America. We can't afford to find out what happens without it.

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*U.S. Senator John Boozman, Arkansas Republican, is the Ranking Member on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. He is the state's senior Senator and serves on Appropriations; Environment and Public Works; and Veterans' Affairs Committees. A fifth-generation Arkansan, he is a consistent champion for the state's farmers, ranchers, and loggers and was instrumental in the fight for an equitable farm bill.*

# Water infrastructure protects communities, safeguards farms, prevents insurance spikes



By U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer

**M**anaging water matters. North Dakota's snowy winters and wildcard spring weather can combine to form the perfect storm for flooding. Come the spring melt, our greatest concern is preventing floodwaters from washing over entire communities.

## Proactive infrastructure investment saves taxpayers billions in damages.

From the Souris to the Red River, water infrastructure is essential in our battle against the springtime onslaught of rain and melting snow. Our state is no stranger to this challenge. For over one hundred years, North Dakotans braced themselves in March and April while praying for a slow, rain-free melt. The memories of the Souris River and Missouri River floods of 2011 and the Red River Valley floods of 1997 and 2009 are vivid: dikes piled high with sandbags, roofs of homes peeking above the murky river, and standing water over farmland as far as the eye can see.

In Grand Forks, the spring of 1997 brought back-to-back blizzards and a hundred-year flood, which some residents still refer to as the Flizzard. The predicted crest increased overnight and the river rose five feet over the city's dikes, several of which broke under the immense stress. A little over a decade later, the Red River Valley flooded again with Fargo as the epicenter. Despite the memory of 1997, it was hard to believe another hundred-year flood would hit the valley, and residents fought the rising river through rain and sleet. Across the state, the Souris River Basin, which

runs through Minot, experienced a late-spring flood in May 2011. Despite a reprieve after the first crest, a second wave forced two rounds of evacuations. Not only did it crest several feet above the previous record, but it also flowed over twice the highest recorded rate. The water drowned out Minot's levees and displaced a quarter of its residents.

Millions of sandbags later, these floods cost billions in physical damages. Thank-

investments in the safety of North Dakotans and the stability of our economy.

The Fargo area is nearing the completion of its diversion project, adding onto the flood-fighting infrastructure like bolstered walls and dikes. While the vast majority of the funding was a result of local efforts, hundreds of millions in federal funds from the recent Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act have supplemented the project.

if it were expected rather than a catastrophe. We'll also reduce costly federal flood insurance requirements on thousands of homes and prevent massive increases in premiums. Better managing water ensures farmers can access their land for spring planting, limiting the need for federal crop indemnity payments.

Make no mistake: North Dakota will continue to flood. Thankfully, we avoided severe floods this year, but luck



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Rising waters from the Red River flooded Fargo, N.D., in 2011. Officials hope a new plan to siphon off part of the river will prevent future flooding.

fully, North Dakotans did not sit idly by waiting to get hit again. Grand Forks completed its flood protection project in 2007, consisting of a levee which retains water from the flooding river and a diversion channel that moves overflowing water to the west side of the city.

In Minot, over \$71 million has been utilized to build out infrastructure, mitigating the effects of another 2011-type flood. This is all tied into the larger state and federal Souris River Flood Protection Plan, which I helped authorize in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020. To their credit, cities across the state took the initiative and raised billions for flood prevention efforts. None of these projects are silver bullets, but they are long-term

On the federal level, I helped craft and negotiate recently enacted laws like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 from my seat on Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittees. These bills provide critical resources to North Dakota, including \$592 million for water and flood mitigation. Sustained federal partnership with the state will help North Dakotans sleep a little better, without worrying about how high the water will rise or if the levee will hold.

Proactive infrastructure investment saves taxpayers billions in damages. While expensive, it is also only a fraction of the cost of fighting a flood without it. Cities will be able to deal with flooding as

is not an adequate mitigation strategy. Our communities and economies are worth protecting. I look forward to the completion of these projects and finally celebrating the joys of spring without the heartache (and backache) of fighting another flood.

.....  
*U.S. Senator Kevin Cramer, North Dakota Republican, is the Ranking Member of the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure. He also serves on the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs and Budget Committees. His prior service includes the North Dakota Public Service Commissioner and in the U.S. House of Representatives.*

# Don't "finish the job": President Biden's electric vehicle pipe dream



By U.S. Sen. Deb Fischer

Last month, President Joe Biden announced that he and Vice President Kamala Harris are running for reelection in 2024 — they're running to "finish the job."

What job does President Biden want to finish during a second term in the White House?

**"[The Biden administration is] ignoring the difficulties a dramatic federal mandate will pose for infrastructure, energy security, and consumers."**

Well, the day he entered office, he started working hard on relentless, radical climate mandates.

As a member of the U.S. Senate, I've pushed back against excessive, top-down regulations from this administration time and time again. Most recently, the Senate passed my resolution to overturn a stifling Biden regulation on heavy-duty vehicles. That rule would affect every consumer, agricultural producer, and trucker around the country by raising costs.

Now, in the name of climate, the Biden administration wants to control which cars Americans are allowed to drive.

In April, the EPA proposed new regulations cracking down on vehicle emissions. These standards would make it harder for people to drive gas-powered cars, in an attempt to coerce Americans into purchasing new electric vehicles (EVs).

The Biden administration's "emissions plan" is a pipe dream. The EPA wants 67% of the cars in the country to be electric by 2032, just nine years from

now. Last year, EVs only accounted for six percent of new automobile sales. And the International Energy Agency predicts that by 2030, EVs will only make up 15% of the vehicles in our country.

The administration is using its imagination to try to create a world that real Americans don't even want. In the process, it's ignoring the difficulties a dramatic federal mandate will pose for infrastructure, energy

increase in EV use could cause serious issues with the grid. During a heat wave last September, power authorities in California had to ask residents to avoid charging their electric cars in the evenings, for fear that the power grid would malfunction from being overwhelmed. We can only imagine what might happen if EV use increased exponentially like the Biden administration is trying to push.

working conditions for the miners.

Unsurprisingly, upending our transportation infrastructure and energy security for an EV mandate isn't popular. A recent Pew Research poll found that the majority of Americans oppose the Biden administration's plan to phase out gasoline-powered cars and trucks by 2035.

Americans have the right to buy electric vehicles if they so choose, and I support that right — but they should also



security, and consumers.

Heavy cars like electric vehicles take a toll on our roads and bridges. Their weight pulverizes the road bed, necessitating more maintenance, more upgrades, and more costs. Right now, though, the sale or charging of EVs doesn't contribute anything to the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), which provides 90 percent of federal highway assistance.

Gas-powered cars pay into the HTF, which repairs wear and tear from vehicles on the highway. The HTF exists to fix exactly the type of damage that heavy EVs can cause, so it's only fair that both gas-powered and electric vehicles contribute to the fund. I plan to introduce a bill soon that would fix this discrepancy.

Another infrastructure challenge created by an EV mandate relates to the power grid. Electric vehicles rely on the electric power grid, and a massive

If EV use is going to increase, it should be a natural growth driven by consumers, so power producers and electrical grids have time to grow and adapt to new spikes in electricity demand.

The repercussions of a federal EV mandate go beyond American infrastructure. China completely dominates the EV battery supply chain, and that's not going to change anytime soon.

China accounts for 70% of the world's EV battery cell production capacity, according to the International Energy Agency's Global EV Outlook 2022. Our domestic supply isn't anywhere near the demand that would result from this new regulation. The irony is that many of the same activists who support an electric vehicle mandate oppose the U.S. mining needed to make EV batteries. They would rather use horrible mining practices in other countries and support dangerous

have the right not to buy one. The Biden administration's plan for a utopia of perfectly green vehicles is a cute idea, but it's completely out of touch with the reality of our transportation system. It's also out of touch with Americans' real needs and desires. For the sake of Americans across the country, this EV mandate is one job President Biden shouldn't finish.

*Deb Fischer is the senior senator from Nebraska. She was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 2012 and again in 2018. Senator Fischer serves on the following six Senate committees: Armed Services, Appropriations, Commerce, Agriculture, Rules, and Ethics. On Armed Services, she is the top Republican on the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces. This subcommittee directly oversees two unified combatant commands: U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Space Command.*



# Transportation & Infrastructure Committee will deliver supply chain solutions Americans deserve



By U.S. Rep. Sam Graves

Since President Biden took office more than two years ago, his administration pursued a big spending, anti-energy agenda that led to sky high inflation, a worsening supply chain crisis, and compounding hardships for so many Americans.

As a result, the American people entrusted Republicans with control over the House of Representatives, and with that newfound majority we passed the *Lower Energy Costs Act* (H.R. 1), priority legislation to lower energy costs for all Americans. Now lawmakers on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee are working on legislation to address persistent supply chain challenges.

There isn't one simple solution to these complex problems. There are many factors that contribute to the high cost of moving goods throughout our nation's supply chain. But the policies the Biden administration and liberal leaders pushed through last Congress not only missed the mark – they've made matters worse.

The radical agenda they pursued through the ironically named *Inflation Reduction Act*, as well as actions by the Executive Branch, have increased energy and transportation costs, discouraged work, and further fueled inflation.

President Biden – in both his actions and rhetoric – has demonstrated both a lack of understanding of the multifaceted supply chain issues, and the fact that his administration has no real plan to solve it. During the height of the crisis, I was personally offended by his calls for the private sector to “step up,” specifically calling out “terminal operators, railways, trucking companies, shippers, and other retailers,” while his administration focused on photo ops and finger-pointing. It's not the responsibility of private companies and workers to

bail out this administration's bad policies that led to this crisis and have continued to make it worse along the way.

It's time for leadership on this issue that has impacted every American. The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is ready to put forward common-sense solutions to build a more resilient supply chain, protect the efficient movement of goods, and provide Americans with some much-needed relief.

issues, target investment toward supply chain improvements, and more.

Unlike what we've seen in the previous two years, we will not push through one massive package – with nobody really knowing what is in it. Our solutions will come in the form of standalone,

develop solutions that will pull back the heavy hand of the federal government from supply chain operations, allow infrastructure funds to be used to increase efficiency at our nation's ports, expand vital streamlining reforms, address the trucker shortage that's holding the supply chain hostage in many cases, and prioritize critical supply chain projects for grants and infrastructure funding.

Everyday Americans already



As I've already stated, there is no one easy fix. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed, and the Biden administration's policies worsened, fragilities within our nation's supply chain.

For instance, a lack of safe and adequate truck parking, congestion at ports and freight distribution facilities, inefficiencies and poor conditions at intermodal connectors, and the increasing cost and shortage of equipment have all hindered the trucking industry's capacity to move freight. Workforce shortages are also a persistent issue across industries.

This year, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has dedicated multiple hearings to examining the nation's supply chain challenges and potential solutions. In the coming weeks, our Committee will focus on moving legislation that will improve government efficiency, remove barriers to supply chain efficiency, address labor shortage

**In the coming weeks, our Committee will focus on moving legislation that will improve government efficiency, remove barriers to supply chain efficiency, address labor shortage issues, target investment toward supply chain improvements, and more.**

targeted bills – including measures that can attract bipartisan support.

It's easy to talk about the supply chain problem, point the finger at others, and deflect blame while not actually taking any substantive action to tackle the crisis at hand.

The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is putting in the work to

have enough on their plates.

The supply chain disruptions that have persisted for several years have only created more obstacles to putting food on the table, paying the bills, and living out the American Dream.

It's time for elected officials to “step up,” to quote the President, even though he hasn't followed his own advice. The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is ready to do just that.

.....  
*U.S. Representative Sam Graves, Missouri Republican, is the Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. His leadership on infrastructure policy is critical as he works on behalf of Missouri's 34,000 highway miles and 10,400 bridges in need of maintenance and repairs as well as the Sixth Congressional District's two major rivers, the Missouri and the Mississippi. He is also a member of the Armed Services Committee.*



ASSOCIATED PRESS

This photo taken with a drone shows portions of a Norfolk and Southern freight train that derailed in East Palestine, Ohio.

# Bipartisan *RAIL Act* will fast track pragmatic changes to rail industry



By U.S. Rep. Bill Johnson

**O**n February 3rd, the small village of East Palestine, Ohio, changed forever when a train carrying hazardous materials derailed – ultimately causing a plume of toxic chemicals to be released into the air and piles of toxic waste to accumulate at the crash site and surrounding area.

Understandably, residents immediately feared for their health and questioned the safety of the air, water, and soil that surrounded them.

After seeing how that tragic train derailment in East Palestine, which I represent in Congress, affected the people of that small Appalachian village – I saw

a need to take action to improve the way our nation's freight rail systems operate.

Trains carrying hazardous materials run through small towns all across America every day. And Americans from every corner of the nation are understandably concerned about the safety and accountability of our nation's rail system.

Safety Board's (NTSB) investigation of the East Palestine train derailment, to recommend new safety requirements and procedures for all trains carrying hazardous materials.

It's critically important that we get all the facts and information from the investigation. The recommendations from

## **Locomotive derailments and accidents are far too common - averaging approximately three per day - putting our communities at risk.**

Safety is crucial, and there are several steps Congress can take right now to keep our communities safe and better prevent a disaster like this from occurring in another community. One of them is by passing the bipartisan *RAIL Act*, which I introduced in March with my Ohio Democratic colleague, Emilia Sykes. In fact, 12 members of the Ohio Congressional delegation – Republicans and Democrats – are sponsors of this bill. It's rare to find many big issues in Washington these days where so many from opposite parties will come together and agree on. But this is one of those issues.

The *RAIL Act* makes important and pragmatic changes to the way our nation's rail industry operates, ensuring that our families, friends, and neighbors are kept safe.

My legislation directs the Federal Rail Administrator, in conjunction with the findings of the National Transportation

the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and NTSB will look at everything from train length and weight to route analysis, speed restrictions, and track maintenance. Most importantly, it will also push more funds to first responders, paid for entirely by the railroads.

The first responders on the scene in East Palestine did a tremendous job identifying the chemicals and containing the fire, coordinating evacuations, and managing the crash site. Without their heroism, a very bad situation would have been much, much worse.

Our legislation increases training and funding for our nation's first responders, ensuring communities across America are kept as safe as possible in the event of another derailment disaster – without spending a dime of taxpayer dollars.

Finally, the *RAIL Act* holds the rail industry accountable by increasing penalties and fines for rail safety violations.

East Palestine, like many other towns and villages across Ohio and the United States, is in close proximity to an active and busy rail line. The fact is freight trains are vitally important to our economy — they transport to market many of the raw materials and goods that make modern life possible. However, locomotive derailments and accidents are far too common - averaging approximately three per day - putting our communities at risk.

It's time to improve our nation's rail safety standards, and the *RAIL Act* does that.

I encourage Congress to come together, just like our Ohio delegation has, and work together to pass this important legislation.

.....  
*U.S. Representative Bill Johnson, Ohio Republican, chairs the Environment, Manufacturing & Critical Materials Subcommittee on the House Energy & Commerce Committee. Representing the state's 6th Congressional District, he fights to create jobs in rural Ohio, improve services to veterans, and to make our federal government more effective, efficient, and accountable to the American people. Prior to Congress, he served 26 years in the U.S. Air Force and received the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel and co-founded Johnson-Schley Management Group, Inc., an information technology (IT) consulting company.*

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Hydrogen energy storage concept.

# Arizona must lead on energy infrastructure investment



By U.S. Rep. Debbie Lesko

Arizona is becoming a leading example of our nation's drive toward a cleaner, more affordable, and more reliable energy future. As Arizona's population continues to grow and as manufacturers, such as the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, continue to move to Arizona, energy demand will continue to rise.

Arizona's realistic approach includes using all of our energy resources and capitalizing on energy innovation. Liberals' solar- and wind-only approach has proven to be unsustainable and unreliable. Instead, we must utilize an "all-of-the-above" energy strategy, which requires investment in a variety of energy sources and infrastructure to protect grid

reliability and our nation's energy future.

Arizona has long been recognized as the most reliable electric provider in the country. However, even Arizona has seen warning signs that threaten our reliability. To maintain our power grid's reliability and affordability, we must increase investment in reliable baseload generation, renewables, hydrogen, and new technologies. We must also invest in the pipelines and power lines needed to deliver that energy from where it is produced to where it is consumed.

**We must also invest in the pipelines and power lines needed to deliver that energy from where it is produced to where it is consumed.**

It is important that Arizona and the United States continue to use an all-of-the-above energy approach and not rely on only one or two sources of energy. Arizona has one of the highest utilization rates for solar power anywhere in the nation. However, solar power in Arizona produces energy only 29% of the time on average, making it an unreliable source for constant output. To bolster grid reliability, Arizona must invest in natural gas, nuclear, hydroelectric, hydrogen, solar, wind, carbon-capture, and new technologies, along with pipelines and transmission lines.

Arizona also has the benefit of learning from the grave mistakes our neighbor, California, has made in its rush to use only green energy sources. Arizona's

realistic approach focused on reliability, affordability, and innovation will allow the state to attract more businesses and manufacturing while preventing rolling blackouts. Keeping the lights on should not take a back seat to unrealistic Green New Deal aspirations.

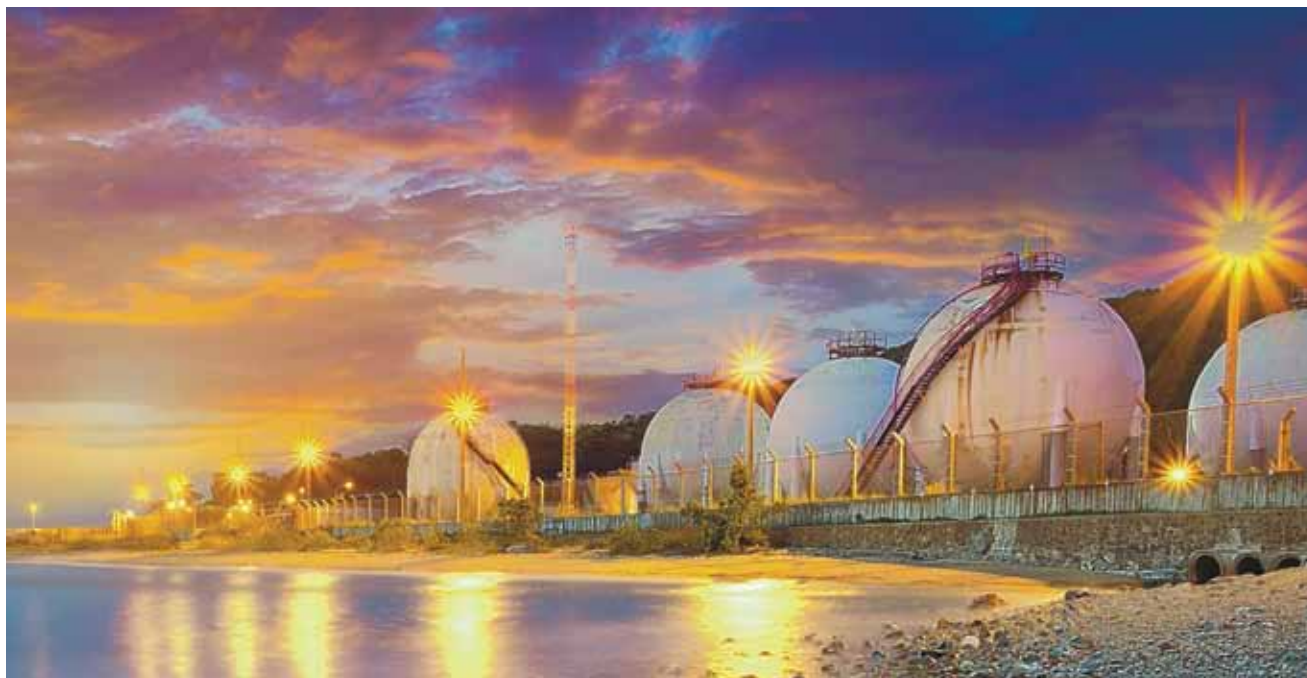
To that end, it is exciting to see that hydrogen power is gaining traction in Arizona. Arizona is uniquely poised to be a successful hydrogen hub, as it already has large investments in solar and nuclear energy generation, as well as the geo-

capture technology. This technology will also require pipeline infrastructure. Transporting captured carbon dioxide requires pipelines to move it from the place where the carbon dioxide is emitted to a safe and secure sequestration location. The United States has done a comprehensive geologic survey of the entire country, and we now know the best places to store these emissions.

The safest, most realistic, and most affordable way to support clean energy is through pipeline infrastructure. Clean natural gas, hydrogen, and captured carbon dioxide will all require a network of pipelines to move the product from where it is manufactured to other locations around the country.

The United States has been a global clean energy leader, and American-made energy continues to be the cleanest in the world. Among the United States, Arizona can and should lead the way. We have an abundance of resources right here at home, that, with the right infrastructure, can unleash American energy independence without sacrificing reliability and affordability for our families.

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*U.S. Representative Debbie Lesko, Arizona Republican, is a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, where she serves on the Subcommittees on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security; Innovation, Data, and Commerce; and Oversight and Investigations. She represents the state's Eighth Congressional District and is also a member of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic.*



# REIN in big government to unleash our energy economy



**U.S. Rep. Kat Cammack**

**E**very element of our lives begins with energy. From the literal fuel we put in our cars and trucks to the industries we dominate, energy is the foundation. There is no doubt that the United States is rich in natural resources, including natural gas. But what is often left out is the creative thinking that continues to drive innovation. Unfortunately, this administration seems to think that the heavy hand of government is the answer. I propose that, in fact, it's the problem. With over 1.3 million active regulations on the books, key industries and consumers are feeling the squeeze.

The solution is to rein in big government and radically change the way government agencies regulate.

As a member of the House Energy

& Commerce Committee, H.R. 1 represents years of thoughtful legislation that prioritizes domestic energy production and increases our North American energy security by reforming permitting for key energy infrastructure projects across our borders. While this administration continues to call for unaffordable electric vehicles in a tone-deaf “holier than thou” approach to so-called “green energy,” the Lower Energy Costs Act stops the administration’s attempt to phase out gasoline-powered vehicles and encourages an all-of-the-above set of solutions that take advantage of our energy-rich resources here at home.

mineral harvesting, it’s time we take advantage of the resources available on our own soil to establish our energy security dominance.

One advantage of LNG is its convenience for transportation and storage. This is particularly important for areas of the country not connected to the natural gas pipeline network. Transported by truck or ship and stored in tanks until needed, LNG is a flexible and valuable option for communities looking to diversify their energy sources and reduce their dependence on costlier options.

LNG also plays a critical role in national security and our energy

the permitting process by reforming the burdensome regulatory environment that has stifled innovation and investment with government overreach and bureaucracy.

A bill I introduced this Congress, H.R. 277, the Regulations from the Executive In Need of Scrutiny Act (REINS) takes necessary steps to address this executive overreach that has run rampant for decades, of which administrations on both sides of the aisle are guilty. REINS prohibits any “major rule” costing more than \$100M from going into effect without congressional approval. This returns the power to the American people instead of the nameless, faceless bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., and ensures that Congress is the true lawmaking authority, not the federal agencies.

As we work to re-establish American energy dominance in the U.S. and rein in the regulatory overreach that has stifled innovation and development of our resources, we must work to strengthen our infrastructure and create an environment for our energy independence that is more secure, sustainable, and prosperous.

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*U.S. Representative Kat Cammack, Florida Republican, serves on the House Energy & Commerce and Agriculture Committees. She represents the state’s Third Congressional District and works to address the challenges faced by working-class families and Florida’s farmers, ranchers, and producers with rising inflation, labor challenges, and supply-chain issues.*

## **To bolster our energy infrastructure for LNG and other energy sources, streamlining the regulatory process to make it easier for companies to build new terminals and pipelines will be pivotal for encouraging investment.**

In Florida, we’ve been strong proponents of liquid natural gas (LNG). Jacksonville, just outside of my district in North Central Florida, is home to the country’s largest LNG bunkering facility. LNG has become an increasingly important source of energy in the U.S., and for good reason. It’s a clean-burning fuel that’s abundant and has the potential to create thousands of jobs that will strengthen our economy and reduce our reliance on foreign energy sources. While China expands its global footprint in energy production and critical

independence. By reducing our dependence on foreign oil and gas, we strengthen our energy security and reduce our vulnerability to supply disruptions and price volatility, which we’ve seen in the last several years due to COVID and supply chain challenges.

To bolster our energy infrastructure for LNG and other energy sources, streamlining the regulatory process to make it easier for companies to build new terminals and pipelines will be pivotal for encouraging investment. Thankfully, H.R. 1 works to improve

# Cooperate and coordinate on infrastructure to close digital divide



By U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg

In March of 2020, broadband internet reached my home in rural Michigan for the first time ever. When schools and businesses were forced to go online, we were able to continue working, stay connected to family, and reach our doctors when needed. My family was lucky, but for tens of millions across the country, connection is still not a reality.

The pandemic is over, but the massive digital divide that it exposed persists. Every week, I hear from constituents who have no option for high-speed internet. Just a few miles down the road, my neighbors do not have a reliable connection. The consequences of this are significant, and these families, farmers, and businesses in rural America are being left behind in the digital age.

Throughout the last three years, nearly \$100 billion has been allocated for broadband through several different programs, including \$65 billion for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

Republicans in Congress know money is not a fix-all. We need to address the remaining obstacles to deploying broadband infrastructure and get all Americans connected.

First, our permitting processes need to be updated and streamlined. Unpredictable timelines for permit approvals and exorbitant fees for applications have made it slower, more expensive, and onerous to deploy broadband infrastructure. To address this, my House Energy and Commerce Committee colleagues and I have reintroduced our comprehensive permitting package. This slate of bills will cut through unnecessary red tape, enforce needed shot clocks on agency reviews, and harmonize application processes and fees.

Hurdles exist at the federal, state,

and local level and ongoing disputes between area incumbents and broadband providers further exacerbates the problem. As a part of any broadband infrastructure update, we must improve coordination and cooperation between broadband providers, government agencies, and other stakeholders, such as utilities, transportation, and public safety. Coordination should also come

and training skilled workers.

We cannot hamstring ourselves with a one-size-fits-all approach to connection. Deploying fiber to every single home is unrealistic and expensive. Federal, state, and local officials should commit to tech neutrality if they truly want to close the digital divide. Embracing an all-of-the-above approach to broadband – fiber, cable, wireless, and

simply throw money at the problem and hope that it goes away. We need to make sure that the funds are being used in the most effective manner possible, and that means targeting areas that are in the most need.

These recommendations are not a panacea for all the challenges of broadband infrastructure deployment, but they are necessary steps towards a



**Coupled with ongoing supply chain shortages, the need for fiber splicers, tower climbers, technicians, and more will significantly delay infrastructure deployment.**

with transparency and accountability, such as publishing data on the status and outcomes of permits.

It is imperative that we also grow our telecommunications workforce. The money from NTIA has not even been distributed and the industry is already scrambling to keep up with demand. Coupled with ongoing supply chain shortages, the need for fiber splicers, tower climbers, technicians, and more will significantly delay infrastructure deployment. Last Congress, my legislation, the Telecommunications Skilled Workforce Act, was signed into law.

It has helped identify shortfalls in the industry, and spurred the Government Accountability Office to issue a report that found we need at least 34,000 additional workers this year to support the broadband expansion programs. Communities need to use existing funds to invest in workforce development, but the private sector and our community colleges should also play a role in recruiting

satellite– will speed deployment and offer good connection now. Fiber's speed and forward-looking status offer many benefits, but it should not be treated as the only solution, especially if it means parts of rural Americans have to wait years more for a reliable connection.

The digital divide between urban and rural America is unacceptable, and we must do everything in our power to close that gap. As co-chair of the Rural Broadband Caucus, I know this is not just an issue of convenience; it is a matter of economic opportunity, healthcare access, and education. To that end, officials must prioritize funding for areas that are truly unserved. We cannot

more accessible and affordable broadband ecosystem. It requires a collaborative and comprehensive approach from all stakeholders, including policymakers, regulators, providers, and consumers. We must recognize that broadband infrastructure is not just a technical matter but a social and economic one that affects our daily lives and our future prosperity. We must act urgently and decisively to finally get all Americans connected.

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*U.S. Representative Tim Walberg, Michigan Republican, serves on the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Education and the Workforce Committee. He is co-chair of the Rural Broadband Caucus and vice chair of the Innovation, Data, and Commerce Subcommittee. The Dean of the Michigan House delegation, he represents the state's Fifth Congressional District. He served as a pastor and in the Michigan State House prior to joining Congress.*

# Reliable broadband is a necessity for all Americans



By U.S. Rep. Rick Allen

**H**igh-speed broadband is a critical part of today's modern economy, no matter where you live. Whether it's a patient seeking telehealth services, a student accessing online resources for homework, a farmer who wants to use analytics software to improve their operation, or a small business that simply wants to share its product with the world, Americans are increasingly reliant on internet connectivity for daily activities.

Unfortunately, many Americans still do not have reliable access to the internet, including in my district and my home state of Georgia. To close the digital divide and further America's leadership in next-generation broadband and wireless networks, we need effective reforms to accelerate the build out of high-speed connections, boost U.S. competitiveness, and ensure our farmers have the 21st century tools necessary to increase production.

As a proud Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, I am in a unique position to play a pivotal role in crafting legislation that lifts regulatory barriers and cuts through the bureaucratic red tape that has worsened the digital divide millions of Americans currently face—and we've hit the ground running in the 118th Congress.

The Energy and Commerce Committee continues to go through regular order to improve our nation's broadband access. In April, the House passed H.R. 1339, *the Precision Agriculture Satellite Connectivity Act*, bipartisan legislation introduced by my friend and colleague, Rep. Bob Latta (OH-05). Agriculture is Georgia's number one industry, and to meet growing demand, farm families must have access to high-speed internet and innovative technologies on the farm to produce higher yields.



**We should be utilizing proven data to ensure our taxpayer dollars are not wasted when U.S. competitiveness and enterprise are on the line.**

H.R. 1339 would require the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to review its current satellite rules to determine if changes can be made to promote precision agriculture. The FCC has many different interests competing for their attention—this bill will mandate them to prioritize our agriculture industry, which will help our farmers get needed regulatory changes faster. As a proud cosponsor of the bill, I am hopeful H.R. 1339 will be signed into law this Congress so our farmers can incorporate new precision agriculture technology and ensure food security, which is national security.

Additionally, the Energy and Commerce Committee is continuing to hold hearings on streamlining permitting to expedite broadband deployment. Among other notable issues, these hearings have shined a light on the shortcomings of *the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*. The bill lacked necessary reforms to address the permitting and processing delays

that are hampering broadband deployment in our rural communities. Unfortunately, this is business as usual in Washington—simply throwing more money at a problem without enacting needed program improvements, leading to wasted taxpayer dollars.

Lastly, one of my top priorities in Congress is to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse by ensuring the Federal Broadband Map is accurate so our federal dollars are prioritized for communities that are truly underserved. I consistently hear from local stakeholders that the FCC's mapping, from which the distribution of federal grant and loan dollars is based, is inadequate and incorrect. The process is improving, including by taking data from States into account. Georgia is

the gold standard when it comes to accurate broadband mapping, and Georgia invested many state resources to recognizing exactly where broadband is needed across the state. We should be utilizing proven data to ensure our taxpayer dollars are not wasted when U.S. competitiveness and enterprise are on the line.

Republicans and Democrats agree that access to reliable broadband is a necessity for all Americans. Checkboard connectivity is not acceptable in the modern economy, and I will continue to work diligently in Congress to close the digital divide so every American has the opportunity to succeed in the 21st century.

*U.S. Representative Rick W. Allen, Georgia Republican, represents the 12th Congressional District and serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Prior to his election to Congress, he built his own successful business from the ground up.*

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