



**Melony M. Bell, Chair**  
Commissioner, District 2

*Board of County Commissioners*  
July 31, 2017

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The Honorable Tom Rooney  
United States House of Representatives  
2160 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Rooney:

The Polk County Board of County Commissioners is writing to offer our strong support of your efforts to restore Congress' Constitutional authority to make needed investments in our country's aging water infrastructure with respect to vetted U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation projects.

Polk County has 554 lakes and is the headwaters to three rivers in Florida. Our county has formed a cooperative water authority with all 17 municipalities due to future concerns for water availability. While Polk County doesn't have any Corps projects currently, we certainly support efforts to establish limited exceptions to the earmark moratorium for these economically-vital water resources development projects.

The Water Resources Development bills enacted in 2014 and 2016 are notable examples of Congress restoring order to the budget process and passing stand-alone authorization bills. The previous annual appropriations process gave us a chance to secure funding for water resources projects, but since 2011 this practice has been banned under the earmark moratorium. The earmark moratorium presents a consistent challenge for our local economy, particularly when we have no recourse to advocate for necessary federal funds for projects that are endorsed by a range of economic and environmental interests, and that benefit from state and local entities ready to meet their cost-share commitments.

Thank you for your efforts and work on behalf of Polk and other counties in Florida.

Sincerely,

Melony M. Bell, Chairman  
Commissioner, District 2