

# CONVERSATIONS WITH CONGRESS: ABC interview with Garret Graves

OCTOBER 2022

A few weeks ago ABC had the pleasure of interviewing Congressman Graves, in a question and answer style interview, where we discussed the current and future state of politics in Louisiana and the United States.

Q. What are some of your most recent achievements as the Ranking Member for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation?

A. We have been setting the stage for the 2023 reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration throughout the past few years. A simple win for our airport infrastructure was the passage of the Expedited Delivery of Airport Infrastructure Act. That bill, which became law on October 10, 2021, allows airports to utilize federal Airport Improvement Program dollars to help incentivize airport infrastructure projects to be completed on time. The bill will ensure that projects are delivered faster and at a better cost to the American people.

A huge component of next year's reauthorization will be helping to ease the entry of new technologies- like drones and small electric aircraft (eVTOL)- into our already complicated airspace.

The next generation of our aviation infrastructure really isn't that far away, but government has to stay one step ahead to remain the world's leader in aerospace. I've worked on two bills that really prioritize this: The Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Coordination and Leadership Act became law this year and will get government agencies to the table to hammer out a coordinated pathway for new technologies to become a daily part of our airspace. The second, the Advanced Aviation Infrastructure Modernization Act, will help state and local governments prepare for these technologies in their communities. These technologies will revolutionize our airspace, but we have to ensure that we have the infrastructure in place to reach our full potential.

Outside of this, we've also secured nearly \$9.5 billion during the 116th and 117th Congress for investments in Louisiana's infrastructure, transportation, flight control, coastal restoration, and hurricane and disaster recovery. This money helps to create safer, more resilient communities.

Q. If Republicans win the majority for the 118th Congress, what will your priorities be?

A. One of my biggest priorities is ensuring that we have the best laws in place to encourage- not stop- infrastructure. That will mean streamlining regulatory

processes and conducting oversight of the Biden Administration's efforts to slow down critical infrastructure projects.

Many Americans are unaware of the extent to which the Biden Administration has manipulated grant requirements to reward -blue cities, unions, and their other allies. The allocation of taxpayer dollars does not reflect the recipients' merit and presents a poor Return on Investment for taxpayers. We will work to reallocate funds and establish fair requirements for grant requests.

Here in Louisiana that means building a new Mississippi River bridge in the Capitol Region, finishing I-49 between Lafayette and New Orleans, or even completing the Shreveport/Arkansas connection.

From a regulatory standpoint, we have to make sure we're not deterring investment. That means streamlining the process while maintaining environmental.

Q. Speaking of our regulatory framework – a lot of rules change as a new administration takes office, which causes confusion and hampers investment. What can Congress do to stabilize executive agency rules so companies can make long-term investment decisions?

A. The current regulatory framework is preventing the Biden Administration from achieving its own infrastructure-related goals. They are slowly confronting the reality that our project delivery system is broken, leaving them unable to move dirt, put steel in the ground, and deliver better outcomes for the American people. I am hopeful that this is an opportunity for Congress to come together to develop a framework that will remain fairly constant regardless of electoral outcomes. Better economic and environmental outcomes should not be mutually exclusive.

\*Continued on page 16



# Conversations with Congress Continued

Q. Most of Louisiana's Congressional delegation, including you, voted against the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act. Tell us about this bill and what, if any, plans you have regarding the funding opportunities within?

A. Rather than addressing our problems – improving traffic congestion, fixing crumbling bridges, and enhancing our flood protection – this bill simply puts good money on top of bad, only increasing the number of bad outcomes we already have. Offering little direction but billions of dollars enables the Biden Administration to enact its alternative vision for America while mandating a slew of new requirements. The Biden Administration has already begun to manipulate grants funded under the bill by inventing new criteria like climate justice, priority communities, and enhancement of union opportunities by requiring project labor agreements. This prioritizes states like California, Michigan, New York, and Illinois to Louisiana's detriment, we've lost out over the past year as a state because of IJJA's flawed framework. That said, now that it is the law, we have an obligation to fight for our state's priorities. Oversight plays a crucial role in succeeding here. The Biden Administration will have to explain how their preferred policies provide a solid return for the American taxpayer. Their inability to make that argument in good faith will force changes that will allow Louisiana access to these funding opportunities.

Q. How can we position Louisiana as a leader in the global energy markets despite current political opposition to oil and gas?

A. Louisiana is and always will be prepared to lead in global energy markets but once Republicans control the U.S. House, we'll be able to utilize our oversight function to shed light on how the Biden Administration's energy policies are harming America's energy security and increasing cost for industry and consumers alike. Contrary to the prevailing narrative, Democrat policies have actually increased global greenhouse gas emissions and doubled (and in some cases tripled) energy costs by making us unnecessarily reliant on hostile foreign sources. This is because American energy producers maintain the highest standards and are more efficient than anywhere else in the world. Once these facts are more apparent, energy policies will have to change.