

**Statement of R.D. James
Nominated to be
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
Before the
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
December 6, 2017**

Chairman Barasso, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the Committee, I am truly honored to come before you today as the nominee to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. First and foremost, I want to thank President Trump and Secretary of Defense Mattis for placing their trust in me and for providing me with this most remarkable opportunity to serve the public in such a vital role. And I thank you Mr. Chairman, and each and every member of this Committee, for allowing me to testify this morning. I am very humbled.

Mr. Chairman, members of this Committee, thank you for kindness in allowing me to first introduce my family. With me today is my love of 47 years, Virginia James. Unfortunately, our son Riley James could not be here today. I also wish to recognize our beloved daughter Elizabeth James, who departed this life 22 years ago, at the tender age of 19 years.

I am R. D. James from New Madrid, Missouri. I'm a farmer, a business man, a civil engineer, and for the past 36 years a presidential appointee to the Mississippi River Commission.

Our country enjoys the largest contiguous acreage of agricultural land in the world. This "bread basket" and abundant food provider also overlays

the longest inland navigation system in the world — actually, longer than all other inland navigation systems combined. Our country is blessed with natural locations along all our coasts that have long served as a “port-of-call” and which can, once deepened, serve and promote our continued participation in the global trade market. These ports are critical to our nation’s defense, our agricultural industry, our international trade, and our economic superiority.

As we all know, none of these natural blessings came cheap or easy. Our forefathers’ blood and sweat built this great commercial infrastructure with shovels, picks, and axes. Suffering and sacrificing for years, our forefathers built this great Nation into the world power it is today and now, we as the benefactors of all this great infrastructure, must do everything possible to maintain and enhance it for future generations of Americans.

The great civil works expansion was assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for good reason. The Corps has always delivered in terms of the civil works mission —*both past and present*. If confirmed, I will do my very utmost to ensure that future civil works missions and assignments are properly and lawfully executed as intended by Congress.

In addition to locks and dams, water supply, navigation, ports, flood control, ecosystem and environmental stewardship, Congress has directed the Corp to construct and operate one crucial source of renewable energy — hydropower. This renewable source now produces more electricity than all other renewable generators combined. Flood control and hydropower facilities have significantly contributed to our “world-class” status.

We have improved, and will continue to improve, our water resources nationwide, together with interconnected ecosystems and environmental enhancements. As we restore past environmental damage and mitigate present impacts, our past investments in water resources infrastructure will benefit our children and their children for years on end.

My 36-year tenure as a member of the Mississippi River Commission taught me some valuable lessons which I would like to share with you:

- Civil works infrastructure directly supports national defense
- Many regions would be out of fresh water without civil works projects
- Silted-in rivers do not transport commerce or sustain jobs
- Outdated and shallow ocean ports will not promote economic growth and continued dominance in world trade
- Inaccessible small ports and harbors will halt the shipping of grain and goods from the interior to large ports
- Crumbling locks and dams will land-lock grain and many other bulk commodities essential to our nation's economic survival
- Inadequate flood control does not protect lives or property, provide fresh water, stabilizes river alignment, or support navigation
- If not neglected, ecosystem restoration and environmental enhancement can be the icing on the civil works cake

Finally, let me just say that I am firmly committed to cooperation and collaboration at all governing levels. I also deeply believe in being a catalyst for friendships and partnerships, nurturing the existing ones and developing new friendships and partnerships based on mutual professional trust and respect. If confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, I plan on immediately contacting OMB, EPA, Interior, and any other agency that has an interest in Civil Works. I am profoundly committed to working with all Federal, State and local agencies, Congress, and the Administration to advance our water resources infrastructure needs.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Carper, and members of the Committee for your time and the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward answering any questions you may have.