

## Organizing State Legislators for a Cleaner, Healthier Mississippi River

### Summary

NCEL created the Mississippi River Legislative Caucus (MRLC) to assist legislators representing river districts and their colleagues committed to a thriving, healthy Mississippi River. The goal of the Caucus is to build the capacity of legislators in river districts to more effectively address river health and water quality issues, and to create a forum for collaboration on growing communities and local economies. MRLC creates opportunities for state lawmakers to interface with river mayors, members of Congress, advocacy groups, and the business community. This project is funded by generous grants from the McKnight Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation.

### Caucus Activities

NCEL staff provides coordinated support to legislators through in-state meetings, email alerts and updates, individual outreach, and a regional forum for legislators throughout the corridor to collaborate with their peers across state and party lines. Legislators are encouraged to contact staff for assistance on any environmental issues.

#### *State Visits*

MRLC coordinators visit river states to host events, hear from MRLC members, and provide resources to improve the health of the Mississippi River. These visits provide an opportunity for legislators to meet with their colleagues from other river districts and hear about issues facing local communities. Members may request a briefing by an issue expert to highlight the latest research and opportunities for clean water and more resilient river communities.

#### *Regional Forum*

MRLC convenes in conjunction with the September annual meeting of the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative to improve communication between local and state governments. This forum enables lawmakers along the river to share successful programs and ideas with one another, as well as learn about innovative solutions from other regions.

#### *Legislative Tracking*

NCEL staff tracks the introduction and progress of bills related to water quality, both positive and potentially negative. As legislation advances, NCEL coordinates with bill authors to offer assistance, such as scientific data, tactical expertise, communication strategies, and successful examples from other states.

### How to Join

There is no cost to join the MRLC and membership is open to all state legislators concerned about a pollution-free, thriving Mississippi River. For more information or to join, please contact **Mississippi River Coordinator, Alayna Chuney, [alayna@ncelenviro.org](mailto:alayna@ncelenviro.org)**.