

L. Harvey Thorleifson Ph.D. P.Geo. D.Sc.
State Geologist, Professor and Director, Minnesota Geological Survey
Treasurer and Mapping Chair, Association of American State Geologists
Testimony on priorities for the FY21 Interior-Environment Appropriations Bill
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
February 24, 2020

Good morning, Congresswoman McCollum, and greetings to everyone in attendance here today.

My name is Harvey Thorleifson. I am State Geologist of Minnesota, and Director of the Minnesota Geological Survey here in Saint Paul, which is part of the University of Minnesota, where I am a Professor.

I appreciate this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Association of American State Geologists, which represents the geological surveys of the fifty States and Puerto Rico.

I first want to emphasize how much we appreciate your efforts, Congresswoman McCollum, which are dedicated to protecting quality of life, and preservation of our natural heritage, throughout this land.

How appropriate it is for us to be meeting, here today, in the Bell Museum.

Two years from now, we will celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the appointment of Professor Newton Horace Winchell, who initiated the Bell Museum, the Minnesota Geological Survey, and the University of Minnesota Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences.

We remember Professor Winchell's contributions to building the State of Minnesota every day, with the Winchell monument at Franklin Bridge, and Winchell Trail along the River.

And, of course, the Dayton family remembers their uncle by placing the first Geological Map of Minnesota as a foldout in their family history.

We thus live in a state with a history of commitment to public health, to prosperity, to safety, and to preservation of our natural heritage.

It is within this context that my focus today will be on the role that geological surveys play in delivering benefits to society.

Geological surveys maintain a comprehensive and consistent understanding, mapping, and monitoring of our entire landmass.

We are a federal nation, so we have a federal survey – the US Geological Survey, or USGS – and state geological surveys.

The geological surveys of this nation work as a team so that government, and society, can function with good science for good decision-making.

USGS, including Mounds View, is a respected institution that provides information we all require to support drinking water protection, hazards resilience, infrastructure design, resource management, and research.

These issues are of escalating importance to the people of this Nation, so we strongly endorse increased funding to USGS, for all of its activities.

In particular, we State Geologists understand the fundamental importance of geological mapping to our aspirations in these fields.

In Minnesota, our County Geologic Atlas program, carried out by MGS, DNR, MDH, and Counties, is a commitment to drinking water that provides essential information, in areas such as the Eastern Metro.

We therefore believe that funding to the USGS National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program, which in turn funds us, should increase in FY21 to \$40.4M, an increase of \$6M above the FY20 enacted level.

This will allow acceleration of needed new mapping, and will sustain Phase Three of the National Geologic Map Database, which already is bringing together federal and state mapping as a seamless database.

I now want to close by expressing appreciation to you, Congresswoman McCollum, for this opportunity to testify. Thank-you.