

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 17, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-128, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Energy & Water  
Development Appropriations  
186 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-146A, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Energy & Water  
Development Appropriations  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Alexander, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, and Ranking Member Feinstein:

Thank you for your efforts to increase U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civil works program harbor maintenance funding in your annual Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies (E&W) Appropriations Acts.

As you work on the Fiscal Year 2016 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, we respectfully request that you give serious consideration for increasing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers allocation from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF). As you know, Federal investments in navigation-related infrastructure are an essential and effective utilization of limited resources, paying dividends through increased trade and international competitiveness, sustainable job creation and more than \$200 billion annually in Federal, state and local tax revenues.

Through making this request, we ask you to reference the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014), which established a 10-year path to fully use Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) collections for their intended purpose. It would be tragic if Congress failed to hit the HMT target after passing this legislation with overwhelming bipartisan support. We also ask that the funding be provided only for authorized harbor maintenance.

More than \$1.8 billion in annual HMT revenue is being collected specifically to meet the nation's annual authorized harbor maintenance needs for harbors of all sizes. Unfortunately, annual appropriations have been significantly less than annual collections, resulting in harbors and navigation channels getting narrower and shallower due to accumulating sediment, declining

dredged material disposal area capacity and deteriorating harbor structures such as breakwaters and jetties due to inadequate funding.

Harbors and navigation channels are a vital part of our nation's transportation infrastructure, and the elimination or reduction in their capacity can have significant impacts on local communities and economies as well as the national economy. WRRDA 2014 recognizes the national need to increase use of HMT collections to benefit all navigation projects, high and moderate use, emerging, underserved and Great Lakes ports, along with expanded uses at donor ports. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has reported that nationwide authorized channel depths are available about half of the time, and then only over half of the channel's width. This drives up the cost of U.S. exports and imports, which threatens U.S. economic growth, and increases the risk of vessel groundings and associated oil spills. Many U.S. exports compete in a very price-sensitive global market where transportation inefficiencies mean losing business to other countries. It is vitally important that the WRRDA HMT commitment be met.

The inland waterways system consists of approximately 12,000 miles of commercially navigable channels and 239 lock chambers to support the movement of goods to and from 38 states. The inland waterways system carries approximately 565 million tons of cargo, valued at nearly \$214 billion, each year. Much of the physical infrastructure of the system is aging, however, and in need of improvements. For example, commercial navigation locks typically have a design life of 50 years, yet nearly 60 percent of these locks in the United States are more than 60 years old. WRRDA and the Tax Increase Prevention Act of 2014 had reforms that will provide more revenue to the inland waterways trust fund and allow more projects to move forward. We urge the committee to provide the highest level of funding for inland waterways construction projects that can be supported by inland waterways trust fund revenues.

While addressing increased funding is difficult, in part because of inadequate Administration funding requests, the United States should not miss opportunities to spur economic growth, improve our global competitiveness and create jobs. We urge you to craft a final Fiscal Year 2016 Energy and Water Appropriations bill that meets WRRDA 2014's Fiscal Year 2016 harbor maintenance and inland waterways spending target and allocation provisions to maintain the nation's shipping channels, our nation's gateways to the global marketplace.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

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DAVID VITTER

United States Senator



ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

United States Senator

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BARBARA BOXER

United States Senator

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RON WYDEN

United States Senator

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RICHARDN J. DURBIN

United States Senator

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CHARLES E. SCHUMER

United States Senator

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BILL NELSON

United States Senator

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MARIA CANTWELL

United States Senator

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JOHN CORNYN

United States Senator



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JOHNNY ISAKSON

United States Senator

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BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

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SHERROD BROWN

United States Senator

*Mark R Warner*

MARK R. WARNER

United States Senator

*Kirsten Gillibrand*

KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

United States Senator

*Marco Rubio*

MARCO RUBIO

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DAVID PERDUE

United States Senator