

May 25, 2016

The Honorable Bill Shuster  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Gibbs  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Water Resources & the Environment  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Napolitano  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Shuster and Gibbs and Ranking Members DeFazio and Napolitano:

The undersigned organizations strongly support the bipartisan draft of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2016 and applaud your commitment to the health of our nation's ports and waterways. In particular, we support the inclusion of a provision that would ensure that taxes paid into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) would be fully utilized for maintenance of ports and harbors beginning in 2027.

Ports serve a critical function in the maritime infrastructure. They are the primary embarkation and entry points for more than 95% (by volume) of overseas trade produced or consumed by the U.S. Physical impediments to the movement of goods through ports, such as shallow depths that limit the size of ships, the lack of access to interconnecting modes of transportation, or the narrowing of channels that increase the risk of ship collisions can cause significant delays and impose tremendous costs on shipping. Therefore, funding for the adequate maintenance of the waterway systems in the U.S. is critical to ensuring that products that consumers want and need can continue to safely and efficiently be delivered without incident, and is paramount to maintaining and enhancing U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace.

For many years, waterways users paid a tax into the HMTF based on the value of their cargo, but the funds were underutilized for the intended purpose of paying for the maintenance and dredging of critical waterways. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has reported that almost 30 percent of commercial vessel calls at U.S. ports are constrained due to inadequate channel depths, and yet the HMTF currently has a surplus of \$9 billion of unreachable funds.

We applaud your leadership to pass WRRDA 2014, in which you made great progress towards correcting this long-standing issue by including a schedule that increases yearly the percentage of HMTF authorized funds to be appropriated from total payments into the fund. These percentages increase until 2025, when 100 percent of the payments made into the fund are required to be appropriated. Your leadership in WRDA 2016 takes the next step to substantially reform the program to ensure that from 2027 onwards the funds for harbor maintenance will be utilized solely for that purpose.

The undersigned organizations strongly support your leadership to improve our nation's infrastructure, and we look forward to working with you to swiftly move this legislation to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives and into law.

Sincerely,



**American Chemistry Council**



**American Petroleum Institute**



**American Waterways Operators**



**National Association of Manufacturers**



**National Retail Federation**



**U.S. Chamber of Commerce**