**Testimony by Dr. Noel Hacegaba**

**Chief Operating Officer and Incoming Chief Executive Officer of the Port of Long Beach**

**Before the**

**House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee**

**Hearing on**

**Water Resources Development Act of 2026: Stakeholder Priorities**

**Wednesday, December 17, 2025**

**10:00 AM**

Good morning, Chairman Graves, Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Larsen, Ranking Member Wilson and Members of the Committee, it is an honor and a privilege to testify before this distinguished subcommittee today.

My name is Noel Hacegaba, and I serve as the current Chief Operating Officer and incoming Chief Executive Officer of the Port of Long Beach. The Port of Long Beach is a nationally significant trade gateway, moving more than $300 billion in cargo annually and supporting 2.7 million jobs across the United States. We moved the most containers of any port in the U.S. in the first quarter of 2025 and continue to move the most tonnage of any port on the West Coast. Approximately half of that tonnage consists of energy commodities that fuel our national economy.

Before addressing the Port of Long Beach's specific Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) priorities, I would like to thank Congressman Garcia, the Port's hometown Representative, for his steadfast support of the Port and for his leadership on the Congressional PORTS Caucus. As the Congressman can attest, seeing port operations first hand is the best way to understand the enormity of the Port of Long Beach's contributions to the nation and I would like to personally invite each of you to pay us a visit in Long Beach. Many of you have already done so, and I thank you for that, and I welcome you back as there is always something new to see as we continue to grow and modernize our Port.

I also want to thank the Committee for its commitment to delivering the bipartisan WRDA bill on a biennial basis. WRDA plays a critical role in strengthening America's economy, supply chain resilience, and national security by providing federal investments in our nation's ports and waterways. From the Port of Long Beach's perspective, WRDA is must-pass legislation and we applaud the Committee's leadership in advancing these critical infrastructure investments for all Americans.

I am here today on behalf of the Port of Long Beach and in partnership with the broader port community, including the American Association of Port Authorities, the California Association of Port Authorities (CAPA), California Marine Affairs and Navigation Conference, and the Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors. Just last week, I was elected President of CAPA by our State's 11 ports, so I am highlighting priorities that benefit not only the Port of Long Beach, but more broadly American ports and our partners along the supply chain.

America's seaports are essential national assets. Our seaports connect American producers and consumers to global markets, support millions of jobs nationwide, and serve as a cornerstone of our industrial and economic competitiveness. The Port of Long Beach, together with our strong workforce anchored by the men and women in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), marine terminal operators and regional and national partners, moves cargo to and from communities in every congressional district and supports strong, resilient supply chains across the country. With 6,000 refrigeration spaces, the Port of Long Beach is the leading gateway on the West Coast to transport perishable cargo such as meats, seafood and produce from California’s breadbasket and America’s heartland. We export soybeans from the Upper Midwest, hay from Arizona, cotton from Texas and the Atlantic South, almonds from California, and pork and beef from Texas, Colorado, Kansas and the Midwest.

In fact, the Port of Long Beach manages billions of dollars in trade for many of your home states. Georgia ranks seventh in the nation in total trade value supported by the Port of Long Beach, with cargo valued at more than $3.6 billion including cars, car parts, fork lifts, bulldozers, and clothing. We move more than $2.3 billion in cargo to and from Florida including clothing, electronic equipment, medical equipment, and vehicle tires. $2.1 billion in cargo through Washington, including clothing, consumer electronics, suitcases, and lamps. Finally, $2.1 billion across Missouri including clothes, aluminum, electronics, furniture, and energy commodities. While the bulk of the value represented is on the import side, hundreds of millions in value is also for exports, and all this trade supports thousands of American jobs in your home districts.

There is a good chance that many that people watching today’s hearing are doing so on a screen that came through the Port of Long Beach, as more than 80% of U.S. televisions move through the San Pedro Bay ports complex.

*WRDA is essential to keeping the flow of imports and U.S. exports moving and to keep our gateways safe, efficient, and competitive.*

At the Port of Long Beach, our ability to safely accommodate modern vessels, move cargo efficiently, and compete in the global supply market depends on safe, navigable deep water channels and supporting in-water infrastructure. Consistent federal partnership through WRDA ensures that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) can plan, authorize, and deliver the projects that keep our channels and harbors ready to ensure America is leading the global economy.

Last year, the Port of Long Beach moved nearly 10 million containers, and more than 200 million barrels of oil. The main channel reaches 76 feet making Long Beach the only West Coast port capable of berthing a Very Large Crude Container ship (VLCC), which can hold more than one million barrels of oil each. The Port of Long Beach is also the only port in Southern California with four terminals capable of receiving liquid bulk cargo, which includes crude oil.

The policies in WRDA that have allowed the Port of Long Beach to work with the USACE to support these commercial maritime operations and safely move energy commodities are critical to America’s economy and our national security. The Port of Long Beach is one of 18 federally designated Commercial Strategic Seaports. In that role the Port stands ready to protect this nation. Recently, we hosted the largest Army Reserve exercise ever, where more than 9,000 reservists underwent training across multiple sites, including the Port of Long Beach. Our participation in supporting this critical need put the safety and reliability of our maritime infrastructure on center stage for national security. Keeping American ports like Long Beach competitive not only economically benefits our nation, but is a matter of national security, and I want to thank you all for your leadership and investment in port infrastructure to ensure American ports continue to be global leaders on trade.

*Deep Draft Navigation*

A top priority for the Port of Long Beach is our Deep Draft Navigation project. This project will deepen the main federal channel from 76 to 80 feet, improving safety, and enhancing efficiency for vessel operations by allowing VLCCs to call at maximum capacity under most weather and tide conditions without waiting offshore. The project will bolster the Port's ability to deliver significant national economic benefits.

Thanks to WRDA 2022, the project has an authorized Chief's Report and received full Preconstruction Engineering and Design funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Our request for WRDA 2026 is the approval of a post authorization change report (PACR) which we have been diligently working on with our partners at the Corps. Authorizing the PACR for this project in the forthcoming WRDA will help ensure our infrastructure keeps pace with evolving cargo volumes, vessel size, and global competition. We seek the Committee's assistance in ensuring that the USACE completes the PACR for inclusion in WRDA 2026.

*Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund/Donor Ports*

I also want to thank this committee for its longstanding work over the years to ensure Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) dollars are fully allocated for their intended purpose. I recognize the significant work the Committee put into the distribution of these critical funds and the Port respectfully requests your continued support to ensure that annual distribution of these funds is not viewed as optional.

In particular, funds for in-water expanded uses have been received only once by qualifying donor and energy ports since they were authorized in WRDA 2020. This occurred in the FY24 USACE workplan which resulted in the distribution of $49 million for Long Beach, which the Port is using for dredging at our berths and for critical seismic and safety improvements at our wharves and quays. For the Port of Long Beach alone, more than $500 million in critical safety projects are planned over the next 10 years in our capital investment plan. A reliable and automatic allocation of HMT expanded use funding is essential to making sure these safety improvements are completed.

As both a donor and energy port, we estimate that the Port of Long Beach alone generated approximately $400 million in HMT revenues in 2024. Over the last decade, the Port of Long Beach has proudly supported our fellow U.S. ports' dredging projects by generating billions to the fund. We are not seeking the creation of a new funding stream. We are simply calling for collected HMT funds to be allocated according to congressional intent to invest a mere fraction of the fund to protect our National Commercial Strategic Seaport and other ports that keep our economy moving and generate billions of dollars in revenues for their states and this country.

*Comprehensive Infrastructure Investments*

While today's hearing focuses on water infrastructure, the purview of this Committee is much more expansive and I want thank the Committee for the work that it is also doing to prepare for the next surface transportation reauthorization bill. Entities like ports rely on strong water and surface transportation networks to support critical supply chains. Modernized navigation and improved freight fluidity can reduce vessel delays and idling, improve operational efficiency, and complement our ongoing work to transition to cleaner, more sustainable goods movement. The Port of Long Beach remains committed to support a more competitive, future-ready maritime industry. Ensuring that waterside access and landside capacity grow together is vital to the country's economic prosperity.

In closing, the Port of Long Beach appreciates the Committee's leadership and bipartisan work to ensure America's maritime infrastructure remains strong, modern, and globally competitive. WRDA is a critical tool for protecting our economic vitality and keeping our supply chains moving efficiently and safely. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to working with you to advance this important legislation, and I would be pleased to answer any questions.