

July 24, 2024

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Carper and Graves and Ranking Members Capito and Larsen:

On behalf of the Maritime Coalition and the undersigned organizations, we are writing to express our appreciation for your unwavering support in maintaining the biennial reauthorization cycle of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). Your leadership is instrumental in ensuring that America's navigation and maritime infrastructure remains robust and efficient.

The U.S. maritime infrastructure system acts as a critical link in the American economy. In 2022, the U.S. maritime transportation system—consisting of harbors, ports, channels, locks, dams, and waterways—delivered over \$2.3 trillion worth of imports and exports.¹ The U.S. coastal port and inland waterway system together support over 2.5 million jobs associated with the shipping industry.^{2,3} Many commodity markets rely on waterborne commerce including farm and livestock products, raw materials and minerals, coal, iron ore, petroleum and petroleum products, and consumer goods. These commodity markets support an additional 28 million jobs throughout the country. With many U.S. jobs and markets dependent upon U.S. waterways and infrastructure, a healthy and reliable maritime system is more important than ever in keeping domestically produced goods and markets competitive.

The U.S. maritime infrastructure system is in critical condition, and geopolitical and national security events have created increased demand for U.S. commodities and energy exports, resulting in pressures on the system not seen in decades. U.S. international and domestic trade is expected to continue increasing while global trade volume, shipping distances, and vessels expand to maximize cost efficiency. While the reliance on the maritime system grows, the existing infrastructure is aging with the average age of docks in the United States now exceeding 50 years. As a result of aging infrastructure, traffic delays, frequent congestion, and added costs are common events for waterway users.

We are particularly grateful for a bipartisan approach to WRDA, which reflects a deep understanding of the critical role that maritime and navigation projects play in our national and economic security. This legislation is a testament to our country's commitment to a thriving maritime industry as part of a broader and integrated infrastructure system.

¹ 2022 USDOT, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, U.S.-International Freight Trade by Transportation Mode

² PwC. Economic Contribution of the US Tugboat, Towboat, and Barge Industry. May 10, 2017

³ Martin Associates. 2018 National Economic Impact of the U.S. Coastal Port System. March 2019

As we anticipate future challenges and opportunities, we are eager to continue collaborating with you and your colleagues.

Thank you once again for your dedication and leadership. Together, we can ensure that our national navigation infrastructure not only meets current demands but is also poised to handle future needs with resilience and foresight.

Sincerely,

American Association of Port Authorities
American Chemistry Council
American Petroleum Institute
American Society of Civil Engineers
Chamber of Shipping of America
Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Company, LLC
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Mining Association
National Waterways Conference
Waterways Council, Inc.
World Shipping Council