



VIRGINIA PORT AUTHORITY
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July 17, 2024

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
US House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
US House of Representatives
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20032

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen:

The Port of Virginia applauds you for your leadership, along with Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chairman David Rouzer and Ranking Member Grace Napolitano, and bipartisan approach in crafting the Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (WRDA). WRDA legislation is essential for maintaining and modernizing projects at our nation's ports and harbors and other areas of water resources infrastructure. Continuing to pass WRDA every two years, as Congress has done consistently since 2014, ensures the US Army Corps of Engineers is authorized to partner with nonfederal sponsors to improve America's water infrastructure. By doing so, WRDA delivers a safe and reliable supply chain and a vibrant economy.

The Port of Virginia is one of the largest and busiest ports on the eastern seaboard. On an annual basis The Port of Virginia is responsible for more than 565,000 jobs and \$124 billion in spending across the Commonwealth, but the port's true reach extends throughout the Mid-Atlantic and across the nation. It is in no small part because Virginia serves as the gateway to global markets for much of the American Heartland. More than 40 percent of the port's volume is put on rail bound to or from St. Louis, Columbus, Chicago, Detroit, Louisville, and other large American cities. The Port of Virginia handles the largest rail volume on the East Coast supporting farmers, logistics distribution, and manufacturers into the Midwest and Ohio Valley. Nationally, The Port of Virginia supports nearly 1.3 million jobs paying almost \$90 billion in salaries and wages and more than \$340 billion in total annual spending across the country. Of equal importance, Virginia is one of the nation's 18 strategic ports, ranking second out of the strategic ports in moving Surface Deployment

Distribution Command ("SDDC") Sustainment Cargo as part of its work with TRANSCOM.

The Port of Virginia also serves as the nonfederal sponsor for the Norfolk Harbor and Channels, Virginia federal navigation project, part of the port's \$1.4 billion strategic infrastructure investment package that focuses on creating efficiency, supporting larger cargo volumes, and increasing the speed of cargo moving through the gateway. The Norfolk Harbor project was originally authorized in WRDA 1986 with further improvements authorized in WRDA 2018. Since 2014, vessels calling on The Port of Virginia have doubled in size - from a capacity of 8,000 Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) to 16,000 TEUs. Based on this growth, the port community is preparing for vessels up to 18,000 TEU in the next few years. The authorized project will deepen the channel to 55' from its current 50' and widen Thimble Shoal Channel to as much as 1400'. The widening and deepening of Norfolk Harbor and Channels will provide for the safe and efficient two-way passage of fully loaded, ultra-large container vessels, preventing delays to both commercial and military traffic.

In partnership with the Norfolk District, US Army Corps of Engineers, the Norfolk Harbor deepening and widening is fully funded and under construction with all major navigational elements under contract and on schedule for completion in August 2025. The Port of Virginia has provided the nonfederal cost share primarily as Work In Kind by awarding and managing three dredging contracts, including the widening elements which were completed earlier this year. As of March 1, the one-way navigation restrictions have been removed, and the project is providing economic benefits to the nation and reducing the amount of time vessels spends on berth by up to 15 percent.

WRDA 2024 provides policy direction to the US Army Corps that will keep the Norfolk Harbor project on schedule and on budget as well as improving the maintenance responsibilities after completion. We thank you, the entire Committee, and your staff for working with us on these provisions. With these provisions, WRDA delivers efficiency and prosperity.

Thank you again for your leadership and efforts on WRDA. Congratulations on strong bipartisan support from the Committee, and we look forward to WRDA's passage by the House and ultimate enactment into law this year.

Sincerely,



Andrew M. Sinclair
Director, Federal Government Affairs