

December 6, 2024

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

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

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

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

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

The undersigned organizations appreciate your leadership in reaching agreement on a bipartisan Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024 and urge swift action by Congress to ensure this critical legislation moves to the President's desk to become law before the end of the year. WRDA is critical biennial legislation that authorizes water resources infrastructure projects that maintain the health of our nation's ports and modernizes inland waterway infrastructure to benefit key manufacturing and consumer goods transfer ports.

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, chemicals, petroleum and petroleum products, and consumer goods. Every day, coastal ports receive over 4 million barrels of petroleum and petroleum products and export over 10 million barrels and over 4 trillion cubic feet of LNG.⁴ Inland waterways move over 1.7 million barrels every day between regions of the U.S.⁵ The coastal port and inland waterway system support an additional 28 million jobs in these and related industries.⁶ 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

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

⁴ 2024 U.S. Energy Information Administration website

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Martin Associates. 2018 National Economic Impact of the U.S. Coastal Port System. March 2019

system grows, the existing infrastructure is aging with the average age of locks 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.

As a significant contributor to the economic success of our local communities, states, and nation, the health of our maritime system is critical to our way of life. Moreover, dependable, modernized maritime infrastructure is essential to maintaining and enhancing U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Accordingly, the undersigned organizations strongly support your bipartisan leadership to improve our nation's infrastructure and urge swift action by Congress to pass this legislation into law before the end of the year.

Sincerely,

American Chemistry Council

American Petroleum Institute

American Society of Civil Engineers

Chamber of Shipping of America

Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Co., LLC

National Association of Wheat Growers

National Mining Association

National Waterways Conference

The American Waterways Operators

Waterways Council, Inc.

World Shipping Council