

December 7, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Pelosi, and Minority Leader Reid:

The undersigned organizations would like to express our support for the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act, and urge you to quickly take up and pass the legislation. In particular, we would like to highlight our support for Section 1108, "Funding for Harbor Maintenance Programs," a provision that demonstrates continued commitment to the health of our nation's ports and harbors.

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.

WRRDA 2014 made great strides 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 to be appropriated. The WIIN Act takes the next step to address an unintended consequence of a percentage-based allocation. The Administration's estimate of HMT revenues can change significantly, as it did this year, resulting in a funding target that was less than the FY 2016 appropriation. This could result in funding reductions and then large jumps in the HMT target when revenue estimates increase, making the target harder to achieve. Section 1108 corrects for this unintended result to ensure appropriations from the fund continue on pace.

The undersigned organizations strongly support your leadership to improve our nation's infrastructure, and we urge you to quickly take up and pass the WIIN Act.

Sincerely,

American Association of Port Authorities
American Chemistry Council
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Forest and Paper Association
American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers
American Great Lakes Ports Association
American Petroleum Institute
American Road and Transportation Builders Association
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Waterways Operators
Big River Coalition
Dredging Contractors of America

Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition
Lake Carriers' Association
Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association
National Grain and Feed Association
National Mining Association
National Retail Federation
National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association
Portland Cement Association
Retail Industry Leaders Association
The Fertilizer Institute
Waterways Council, Inc.
U.S. Chamber of Commerce