

April 16, 2020

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Chairman  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Barrasso and DeFazio and Ranking Members Carper and Graves:

The undersigned organizations strongly support the need for a bipartisan Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) that focuses on the commitment to the health of our nation's ports and waterways. We ask that this legislation ensure needed investments are made to keep U.S. waterways operating safely, efficiently, and competitively in the global marketplace.

The U.S. maritime infrastructure system acts as a critical link in the American economy. In 2016, the U.S. maritime transportation system—consisting of harbors, ports, channels, locks, dams and waterways—delivered \$2.0 trillion worth of goods with half of this volume involving foreign trade.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. coastal port and inland waterway system together support over 2.5 million jobs associated with the shipping industry.<sup>2,3</sup> Many commodity markets rely on waterborne commerce including farm and livestock products, raw materials, coal, iron ore, petroleum and petroleum products, and consumer goods. The coastal port and inland waterway system support an additional 28 million jobs in these and related industries. With many U.S. markets dependent upon U.S. waterways and infrastructure, needed investments are more important than ever in keeping domestically produced goods and markets competitive.

The U.S. maritime infrastructure system is in critical condition and will face increased pressures with international and domestic trade 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 locks in the United States now exceeding 50 years. As a result of aging infrastructure and under investment in modernization, traffic delays, frequent congestion and added costs are common events for waterway users.

To address these challenges, the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 must include provisions to facilitate maintaining the future efficient and effective construction and maintenance of important maritime projects. In addition, provisions must provide flexibility in funding to support needed development and maintenance of the marine infrastructure system. WRDA 2020 must take into consideration the following:

- Amending current law to provide for the assumption of operations and maintenance costs for the locally-preferred plan of a non-Federal sponsor. Current prohibitions deter construction of these maritime system improvement projects that would otherwise increase safety and economic efficiency.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Army Corps of Engineers. Waterborne Commerce Statistics Center. CY 2016 Waterborne Tonnage by State. 2016

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

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

- Amending current law to support non-Federal sponsor construction of critical civil works projects. Modifying these provisions would facilitate timely completion of critical projects with the opportunity for cost savings.
- Amending current law to reduce time-consuming, inefficient, and costly processes that delay construction of ongoing Federally funded navigation projects. Removing duplicative review processes and authorizations would expedite project completion.
- Amending current cost-share law for ongoing and future construction and major rehabilitation projects along the inland waterway system. Modifying these provisions would encourage faster construction and expedite the completion of inland navigation projects.

Funding for the adequate development and 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. As a significant component of local, state, and national economies, the health of our maritime system is critical to our way of life. Dependable, modernized maritime infrastructure is critical in maintaining and enhancing U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace.

The undersigned organizations strongly support your bipartisan leadership to improve our nation's infrastructure, and we look forward to working with you to swiftly move this legislation into law.

Sincerely,

American Association of Port Authorities  
American Chemistry Council  
American Council of Engineering Companies  
American Fuel Petrochemical Manufactures  
American Petroleum Institute  
American Society of Civil Engineers  
Chamber of Shipping America  
Great Lakes Dredging & Dock LLP  
Inland Rivers Ports & Terminals Inc  
National Grain and Feed Association  
National Mining Association  
US Chamber of Commerce  
Waterways Council Inc