

February XX, 2012

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe:

As you continue to work on the reauthorization of a surface transportation bill for our nation, we ask for your attention to a critical component to our transportation infrastructure: our maritime highways. Waterborne transportation is often the least expensive means of transporting vital commodities used for manufacturing, construction, and energy generation. Keeping our ports and harbors in good repair not only supports our economy and jobs, and boosts our international competitiveness, but shipping also helps relieve highway and rail congestion. An April 2010 report by the Department of Transportation stated, "In recent years, it has become increasingly evident that the Nation's existing road and rail infrastructure cannot adequately meet our future transportation needs. Land based infrastructure expansion opportunities are limited in many critical bottleneck areas due to geography or very high right-of-way acquisition costs."

For these reasons, we are urging you to include language in the transportation reauthorization bill that will direct funding that is already collected through the Harbor Maintenance Tax to be used for its intended purposes: the maintenance and operation of the nation's navigational infrastructure. Specifically, we ask you to include the language of The Harbor Maintenance Act (S. 412) in the transportation reauthorization bill. As cosponsors of this important legislation, we hope to see this language enacted as soon as possible. This legislation is too important to rely on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) when it is unlikely that a WRDA bill will be addressed this year on the Senate floor. Our nation deserves an infrastructure that can help hard-working Americans compete in foreign markets, and having a well-maintained navigational infrastructure is vital to this purpose.

Furthermore, the port industry itself generates economic benefits, supporting about 13 million jobs and accounting for \$4 trillion in economic impacts. As a nation that needs to compete in a global economy it is important to recognize that international trade represents about 30 percent of the U.S. GDP, much of which is transported through our nation's ports and harbors.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you to ensure our nation has a strong transportation infrastructure supporting jobs, growing our economy, and competing successfully in this global economy.

Sincerely,