# Support the Boustany Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) Amendment to H.R. 4348

## From: The Honorable Charles W. Boustany, Jr.Sent By: Ryan.Evans@mail.house.govDate: 4/18/2012

# Protect America’s Ability to Export: Support the Boustany Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) Amendment to H.R. 4348

Dear Colleague:

**I strongly urge you to support the Boustany Amendment to H.R. 4348**, **which** includes a guarantee to require the total amount available for spending from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) each fiscal year be equal to the Trust Fund’s annual receipts.

Our nation’s ports and harbors are gateways to domestic and international trade.  They allow food grown in the United States to feed people throughout the country as well as the world.  They also serve as the most energy efficient means of transporting our nation’s energy supplies, building materials and other commodities, while relieving highways of congestion and creating jobs.

Since most harbors and channels accumulate sediment on a continual basis, regular maintenance dredging is required to maintain their authorized depth and width to facilitate vessel navigation.  The Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) and HMTF were established in 1986 to fund operations and maintenance of federal ports and harbors.  The HMT, a user fee, is charged against the value of imports and domestic cargo arriving at U.S. ports that have federally maintained harbors and channels and deposited into the HMTF.

However, these critical federal waterways have not been adequately maintained, which threatens our global competitiveness.  Our nation’s harbors and channels are getting shallower and narrower.  At the end of this fiscal year, the HMTF will have a balance of approximately $7 billion; yet this funding is not being used to address the backlog of necessary maintenance dredging needed to sustain our vital infrastructure.  Failure to maintain these harbors and ports impacts regional and national commerce, reduces our economic competitiveness, and increases the risk of vessel groundings, collisions, and pollution incidents.  Hundreds of thousands of good-paying American jobs depend on this maintenance being accomplished.

During this time of economic turmoil, we cannot afford to threaten these water highways that are so important to our nation’s commerce.  I have introduced an amendment to H.R. 4348 to help remedy the problem by ensuring HMTF funds are used for their intended purpose.  Since this amendment addresses program-wide funding, not specific projects, it is not considered earmark legislation.  The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has also confirmed the Boustany Amendment does not have any scoring impact.  The amendment is supported by a large coalition of ports, shippers, agriculture organizations, manufacturers, exporters, maritime businesses, and labor organizations.

**I urge you to support the Boustany Amendment.** If you or your staff has any questions, please contact me or Ryan Evans in my office (5-2031; Ryan.Evans@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

S/

Charles W. Boustany, Jr., MD

Member of Congress