

Energy and Water Development Appropriations Member Day Hearing

Remarks as prepared for Rep. Huizenga on March 3, 2017

- Thank you Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Kaptur, and members of the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee for allowing members to share their priorities and the needs of their district at this member day hearing.
- Harbors and navigation channels are a vital part of our nation's transportation infrastructure and a reduction in their capacity can have significant impacts on local communities, from the coasts to the Great Lakes.
- I am grateful for your efforts to increase U.S. Army Corps of Engineers harbor maintenance funding in recent Energy and Water Development appropriations bills.
- The Consolidated Appropriations Act for 2016 allocated \$1.263 billion for harbor maintenance, meeting the target Congress overwhelmingly supported from the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014.
- While this is a strong step in the right direction, the funding level only represented 69% of the harbor maintenance taxes collected.
- Full use of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund is urgently needed to support critical maritime economic activity.
- Through a glide path established in WRDA, Congress committed to achieve full use of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund through incremental increases over a ten-year period.
- It is with this spirit that I urge the House Appropriations Committee to stay on the path to full utilization of the trust fund and allocate \$1.333 billion for harbor maintenance in fiscal year 2018. This figure represents 74% of the estimated harbor maintenance taxes collected in 2017.
- During my first year in Congress, our ports and navigation channels were maintained with just 47% of the revenue collected into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund. Having a 74% target for fiscal year 2018 shows just how far we have come.
- By following the authorized glide path, we have stopped adding to the maintenance dredging backlog. However, much more work needs to be done to return Federal navigation channels to full width and depth.
- Tomorrow, the American Society for Civil Engineers will issue their Infrastructure Report Card. Their last report gave waterside freight movement infrastructure a 'D' for navigation channels and a 'B' for ports. Tomorrow's grade will show very few improvements.

- U.S. ports serve as a critical link to connect U.S. manufacturers, farmers, and businesses with markets around the world and are indispensable to making the exports of U.S. goods cost-competitive.
- The inefficiencies resulting from poorly maintained harbors drive up the cost of U.S. exports and imports, which threatens U.S. economic growth. We can't sell more Made-in-America products if they can't leave our harbors!
- While many transportation infrastructure programs are struggling to identify beneficiary-paid revenue streams to meet their needs, maritime commerce has been paying enough to meet the operations and maintenance needs of all federally-authorized harbors for decades.
- This funding is especially vital for the 140 federally maintained commercial and recreational ports and harbors in the Great Lakes, many of which are facing a crisis.
- However, 92 of these harbors have not been federally maintained in many years because of a lack of funding.
- At the same time, the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund has a balance of nearly \$10 billion.
- Instead of increasing the balance of the Trust Fund or spending the money elsewhere, I urge you to dedicate harbor maintenance tax revenue for its intended purpose.
- Enough Harbor Maintenance Tax revenue is collected each year to meet the nation's annual authorized harbor maintenance needs for harbors of all sizes in all regions of our country - from the Pacific Northwest to the Gulf Coast and from the Port of Long Beach to Pentwater, Michigan.
- I am not asking you to fund all of our nation's maritime transportation needs today, but I am urging you to continue on a steady path of incremental funding increases that will soon unlock all of our navigation channels for the free flow of commerce.
- Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Kaptur, and members of the Subcommittee – Thank you again for offering this opportunity and for working with us to maintain our nation's ports and harbors.