

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Member Day

January 14, 2026 | 10:00 AM | 2167 Rayburn House Office Building

Rep. Dan Newhouse (WA-04)

- Thank you, Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to discuss several priorities that are important to my constituents in Central Washington.
- This Congress has passed a significant number of priorities since the beginning of this congress and has the opportunity to capitalize upon that and continue addressing some of the biggest challenges facing our nation's. This includes issues that affect my home state of Washington.
- The first I would like to speak to is the Lower Snake River Dams in Washington. These vital dams, which are operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, can produce enough energy to power the city of Seattle.
- These dams help ensure the reliability of the Pacific Northwest Power system, particularly during periods of high demand or emergencies. They also play a critical role in reducing transportation emissions.
- Between 50 and 60 million tons of cargo are transported by barge along the Columbia Snake River

System each year, as well as 40 percent of America's wheat. This infrastructure provides energy security for millions across the region and supports the agriculture, shipping, and tourism sectors.

- Despite the significance of the Lower Snake River dams and the continuous work to improve fish passage rates, environmental groups for decades have and continue to exploit the litigation system in their pursuit of dam removal.
- In addition to litigation, these groups engaged with the Biden administration to produce a harmful agreement that included mandatory spillage operations that reduced the efficacy of the dams and \$1 billion in taxpayer dollars over ten years to engage in efforts to create a path to breaching these vital pieces of infrastructure.
- Thankfully, the Trump Administration understands the importance of the dams, and the President signed a memorandum revoking this Biden era agreement. This decision restores certainty for the many people and businesses that rely on these dams.
- To protect them from future harm, I have introduced the *Defending our Dams Act*, which prohibits the use

of federal funds from being used in breaching, studying the breaching of, or altering the Lower Snake River dams, and does not allow spillage operations on any of the dams unless such operations are approved by the Secretary of the Army and the Administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration.

- My bill will protect against potential future efforts to remove the dams without congressional approval or reduce their efficacy without the approval of relevant agency leaders.
- I welcome members of the committee to cosponsor my bill to protect these dams and help secure our energy and economic future.
- The other issue that I would like to see addressed is the Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) loophole for Canada and Mexico.
- While the HMT is not the sole factor in importers' cargo routing decisions, according to the Federal Maritime Commission, if Canada's HMT advantage alone were eliminated, up to half of the U.S. containers coming into Canada's West Coast ports could revert to using U.S. ports.

- In addition, the U.S. Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) lost nearly \$600 million in revenue over the last ten years due to the \$466 billion in imports that avoided the HMT by moving through a Canadian or Mexican seaport before entering the U.S.
- I have a bill that addresses this very issue, H.R. 3363, and would welcome any committee members here today to cosponsor this bill. It is time we address this loophole, and my legislation will ensure that it is accomplished.
- Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to the committee and highlight the priorities of the people of Central Washington.