

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 21, 2013

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. President:

As representatives of districts that rely heavily on our nation's federal harbors and ports, we were pleased to see you highlight the need to "upgrade what our businesses need most: modern ports to move [our] goods" as a key point of your State of the Union address to the American people. Like you, we feel that it is imperative our nation's ports and harbors are modernized.

Federal ports and harbors are a critical component of America's infrastructure and economy, requiring regular maintenance to ensure their efficient use. According to the Army Corps of Engineers, nearly 1000 federal ports and harbors have not been adequately maintained due to inadequate budget requests and appropriations. In addition, the Army Corps has estimated that top-priority harbors (those that handle about 90 percent of the commercial traffic) are dredged to their authorized depths and widths only about 35 percent of the time. Inadequate funding has resulted in channels getting narrower and shallower due to inadequate dredging, requiring ships to light-load. Light-loading increases the cost of shipping and the risk of vessel grounding and collisions. Lack of adequate maintenance has far reaching consequences on both the general public and the economy at-large.

As you know, the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) was created in 1986 to establish a dedicated funding source for dredging and other required maintenance of the nation's coastal harbors. Cargo vessels are assessed a user fee on imported and domestic cargo arriving at U.S. ports and harbors. While recent annual revenue from these fees has totaled approximately \$1.5 billion, only about half of that amount, on average, has been spent on its intended purpose. At the beginning of Fiscal Year 2014, the balance of the trust fund is estimated to total approximately \$8,098,000,000. Revenues collected into the HMTF are not being utilized for their intended purposes.

At the same time, state and local stakeholders also recognize the current budgetary constraints federal appropriators are working under. As you may be aware, Michigan's Governor Rick Snyder recently announced a 2013 supplemental measure to address the immediate dredging needs of our state. Local communities and business owners, such as the historic Leland harbor, have raised thousands of dollars to "pitch in" to this much-needed effort to keep traffic flowing on the Great Lakes. As local and state officials have increasingly put "skin-in-the game," now is the time for the federal government to honor its commitment to federal ports and harbors.

As you finalize your FY14 budget, we request that you include sufficient funds for operations and maintenance of federal funds equivalent to revenues collected into the HMTF for FY2014. Failure to address this critical backlog in dredging and harbor maintenance will further jeopardize our nation's ports and harbors, while putting at risk the jobs of many hard working Americans. This issue is critical to improving our nation's infrastructure and strengthening American competitiveness and the economy.

Sincerely,

Dan Benishkek

Dan Benishkek MD (MI-01)

David P. Joyce

David P. Joyce (OH-14)

Sander Levin

Sander Levin (MI-09)

Blake Farenthold

Blake Farenthold (TX-27)

Mike Fitzpatrick

Mike Fitzpatrick (PA-08)

Andy Harris

Andy Harris (MD-01)

Michael A. Grimm

Michael Grimm (NY-11)

Mike Simpson

Mike Simpson (ID-2)

Frederica Wilson

Frederica Wilson (FL-24)

Pete Olson

Pete Olson (TX-22)

Bill Owens

Bill Owens (NY-21)

Kerry Bentivolio

Kerry Bentivolio (MI-11)

Fred Upton

Fred Upton (MI-06)

Don Young

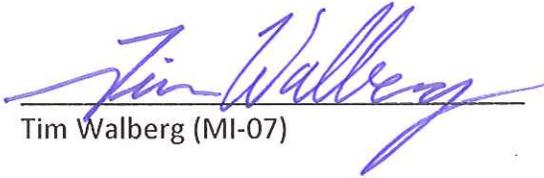
Don Young (AK-AL)

Louise Slaughter

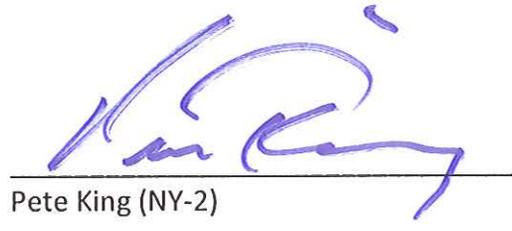
Louise Slaughter (NY-25)

Gary Peters

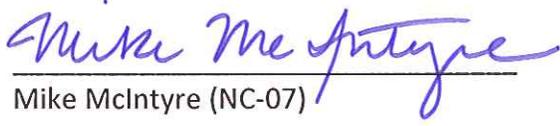
Gary Peters (MI-14)



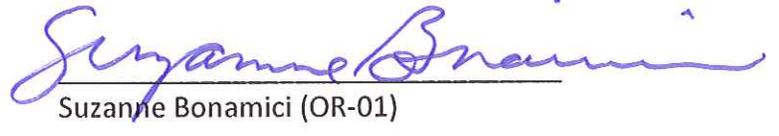
Tim Walberg (MI-07)



Pete King (NY-2)



Mike McIntyre (NC-07)



Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01)