



**AMERICAN
GREAT LAKES PORTS
ASSOCIATION**

April 6, 2017

The Honorable Mike Kelly
Member of Congress
1717 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Kelly and DeFazio:

The American Great Lakes Ports Association is an organization representing the major commercial ports on the United States side of the Great Lakes. Our members include public port agencies, and port-related businesses that rely on an efficient maritime transportation system. We are writing to share our strong support for H.R. 1908, legislation to ensure full use of Harbor Maintenance Tax revenue.

Enacted in 1986, the Harbor Maintenance Tax is a fee collected from users of the maritime transportation system in order to fund the Army Corps of Engineers' operation and maintenance activities. In the Great Lakes, these activities include regular dredging of harbors, maintenance of breakwaters, and operation of the Soo Locks. Despite the fact that adequate revenue is being collected (approximately \$1.7 billion annually), Congress has restricted spending on harbor maintenance due to budgetary constraints. The result is crumbling infrastructure and harbors choked with sand and silt. In the Great Lakes region there is a \$200 million dredging backlog. Breakwaters need \$250 million in repairs, and the Soo Locks require \$115.5 million in rehabilitative maintenance.

H.R. 1908 would effectively take the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund off budget, allowing annual revenue collected from the tax to be made available to the Corps of Engineers. Doing so

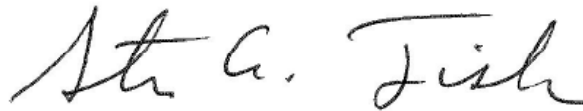
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would increase annual investment in harbor maintenance from approximately \$1.3 billion to approximately \$1.8 billion, allowing the Corps to restore navigation channels to their constructed dimensions and address other critical maintenance needs.

Both the President and Congress are focused on enhancing infrastructure investment. The easiest place to start is here. Congress has already enacted a funding source for harbor maintenance. We just need to spend the money.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "St. A. Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S".

Steven A. Fisher
Executive Director