



THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST SENATE COALITION

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

April 3, 2014

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski, Chairwoman
The Honorable Richard C. Shelby, Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Chairwoman
The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
186 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Feinstein, and Ranking Member Alexander:

As you draft the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2015 (FY2015), we want to call attention to the Great Lakes navigation system, which is a vital part of our nation's transportation infrastructure and economic competitiveness. We greatly appreciate your increased support for the Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) and harbor maintenance in FY2014, which will allow for more efficient transport of critical cargo through harbors and channels. Your strong support for the Great Lakes navigation system is helpful for addressing the large backlog of dredging projects and other maintenance and we ask for continued support.

The Great Lakes navigation system is comprised of 140 federal harbors, over 600 miles of maintained navigation channels, over 100 miles of breakwaters that protect property and allow for safe passage, 22 facilities for management of dredged materials, and three lock facilities. Over 160 million tons of cargo is shipped through the Great Lakes, including iron ore for steel mills and manufacturers; limestone, cement and aggregates for constructing roads, bridges, and buildings; fuel to power homes and businesses; and grain to feed people throughout the world. This mode of transport has both economic and environmental advantages compared to alternative transportation options, providing more fuel efficient transport and saving \$3.6 billion relative to other transportation modes. Great Lakes shipping supports 130,000 jobs, contributes over \$18 billion to the economy, and generates \$2.7 billion in tax revenues. Certainly, supporting this navigation infrastructure is a national priority, and we hope that will be reflected in the FY2015 appropriations bill.

With a dredging backlog of over 18 million cubic yards of sediment, which the Corps estimates would cost \$200 million to address over several years, investment in the Great Lakes navigation system would help reduce the need for vessels to light load (causing shippers to lose millions of dollars in lost freight shipments), vessel groundings resulting in both environmental and economic damages, closed harbors and harbors threatened with closure.

We look forward to working with you to advance a FY2015 Energy and Water appropriations bill that strengthens the Great Lakes navigation system. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Mark Kirk, Co-Chair
United States Senator



Carl Levin, Co-Chair
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Joe Donnelly
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator