

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May, 17 2010

Chairmen John Mica, John Duncan, and Bob Gibbs
Ranking Members Nick Rahall, Peter Defazio, and Timothy Bishop
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As leaders of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, you can imagine the public outrage that would develop if the fuel taxes we all pay did not get used to build and maintain roads and infrastructure as intended. The American people would feel cheated, and rightly so. The fuel tax is a user fee that we all contribute to in order to ensure we have safe and adequate roads over which to travel.

Unfortunately, the scenario above is happening right now in the world of maritime transportation. Currently, shippers pay a Harbor Maintenance Tax that is intended to go into a Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, and in turn is intended to be used to ensure that our harbors are adequately dredged and maintained to keep our maritime commerce afloat. However, only about half of annual Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund revenue is spent for its authorized purposes because the Trust Fund is unprotected. Currently, the Administration chooses to use this multi-billion dollar surplus to balance out other deficits, so that balance really represents an IOU due to the amount of federal debt accumulated by other programs. The Administration's FY12 budget request indicates that it intends to allow federal agencies to expend the remainder of annual Trust Fund revenue on federal agency operating expenses that are currently being paid for out of the general fund of the Treasury.

By failing to spend the Trust Fund for its intended purpose the Administration has effectively abdicated its maintenance dredging responsibilities. This is to the detriment of both commercial and recreational harbors across the country. While the commercial harbors are critical to the movement of goods, the recreational harbors in America serve as economic engines from coast to coast, oftentimes located in small towns and seen as the focal points for the communities they serve. Even those harbors that don't pay the *ad valorem* Harbor Maintenance Tax heavily contribute to their communities through sales taxes, slip fees, and the economic impact boaters have on the shops, restaurants, and other businesses surrounding the harbors.

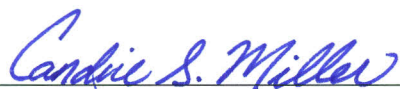
We request that the Committee take up this issue as soon as possible, and stand ready to assist in this matter. Harbors across the country are in great distress. A failure to act will result in the

closure of recreational harbors across the country which will bring great harm to local economies that are already in peril, and the detriment caused to commercial commerce will seriously affect our economy as well.

Please protect the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund by making certain this funding goes toward its intended purpose and providing direction on Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund expenditures to ensure the Trust Fund is used to properly maintain all of our nation's authorized waterways and harbors, both commercial and recreational.

We appreciate your time and attention to this critical matter.


Sincerely,



Rep. Candice S. Miller



Rep. Jeffrey M. Landry



Rep. John Conyers Jr.



Rep. Ted Poe



Rep. Ron Paul



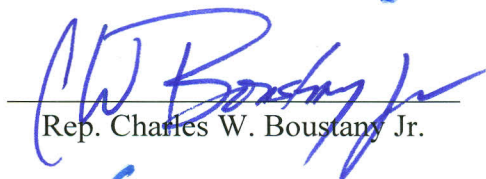
Rep. Jo Bonner



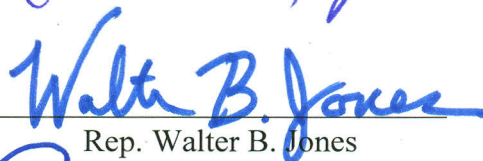
Rep. Pete Olson



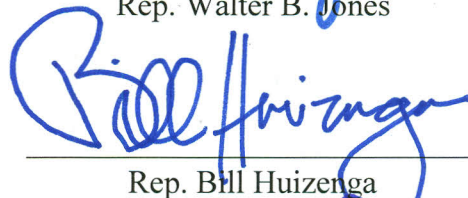
Rep. Fred Upton



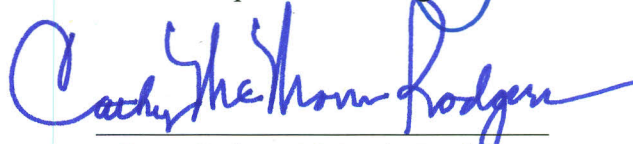
Rep. Charles W. Boustany Jr.



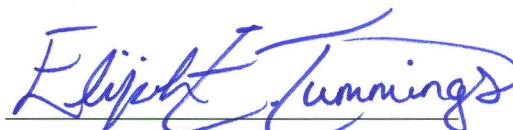
Rep. Walter B. Jones



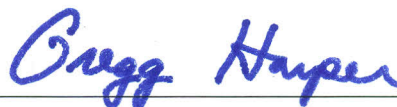
Rep. Bill Huizenga



Rep. Cathy McMorris-Rodgers

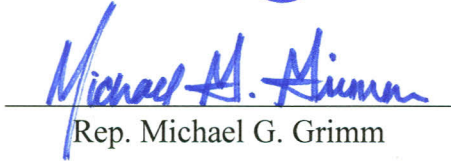


Rep. Elijah E. Cummings



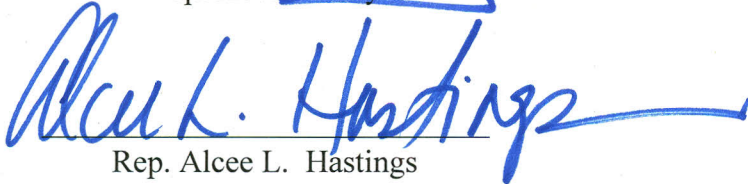
Rep. Gregg Harper

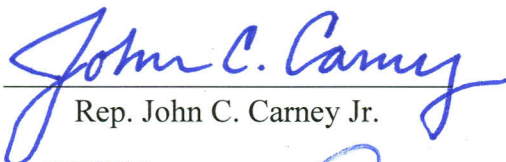

Rep. Mike Kelly

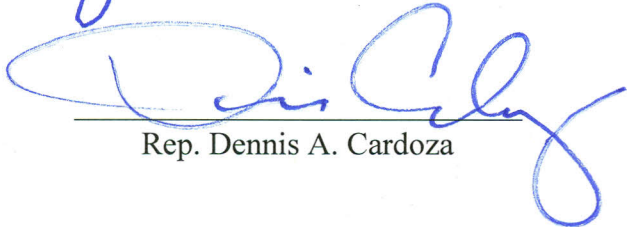

Rep. Michael G. Grimm

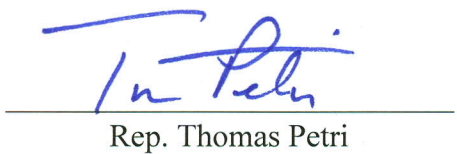

Rep. Dan Benishek


Rep. Kevin Brady

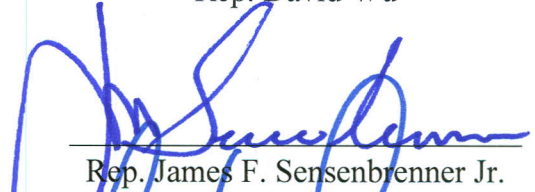

Rep. Alcee L. Hastings


Rep. John C. Carney Jr.

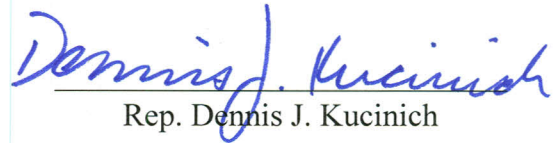

Rep. Dennis A. Cardoza

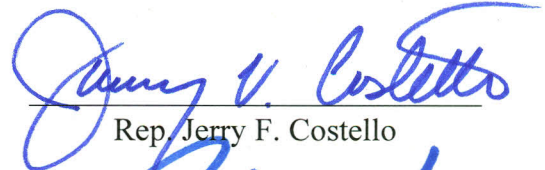

Rep. Thomas Petri

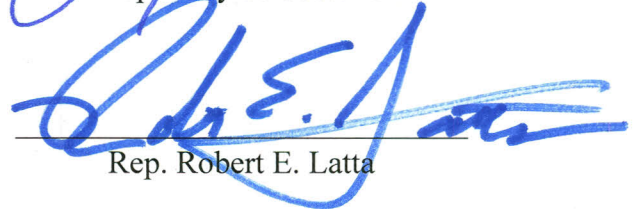
Rep. David Wu


Rep. James F. Sensenbrenner Jr.


Rep. Michael K. Simpson


Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich


Rep. Jerry F. Costello


Rep. Robert E. Latta


Rep. Blake Farenthold


Rep. William Owens