



Great Lakes Legislative Caucus

October 25, 2016

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary
Department of the Army, Civil Works
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Mr. Shaun Donovan
Director
The Office of Management & Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy and Director Donovan:

As members of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus, we are writing to make an appeal on behalf of the 112 federally authorized small commercial and recreational harbors on the Great Lakes that have been deprioritized and thus unfunded in the Federal Harbor Maintenance budgeting process in recent years, including the current 2016 and proposed 2017 budgets. Please note that these harbors are an integral part of the Great Lakes “integrated system of harbors” specifically recognized in the 2014 Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA). The plight of these harbors has come to the attention of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus because of the severe economic crises these harbors face as a result of diminished navigability, and because of the inherent threats to human health and safety posed by impaired access to harbors of refuge in dangerous weather conditions.

Make no mistake: “crisis” is not an overstatement for the situation faced by Great Lakes small harbors. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has presently identified at least 34 Great Lakes small harbors as needing immediate maintenance dredging in 2016, including 19 in Michigan, seven in Wisconsin, six in New York, and one each in Ohio and Minnesota. Seventeen of these are down to only six feet or less of available depth right now, with possible additional shoaling and safety risks to mariners during upcoming storms. Further, when Great Lakes water levels trend downward again, many of these harbors will face virtual closure without maintenance dredging.

The “ask” for this relief is relatively modest. In September 2015, the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus passed the attached resolution proposing a \$20 million annual set-aside in the Corps of Engineers’ Great Lakes Operation and Maintenance (O&M) budget for these federally authorized small harbors. Within the \$143 million appropriated for the Corps’ 2016 Great Lakes O&M program, the small harbor set-aside we propose would amount to 14 percent.

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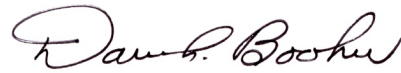
These coastal communities in the Great Lakes are the voice of their 1.6 million citizens (9 million in their counties) who rely on the viability of their harbors more than ever before, as transitional economic patterns have cost many their historic industrial job bases. The economic lifeblood enabled by safe, accessible harbors is a major generator of jobs and investment on both a local and regional scale. Without this lifeblood, the very viability of these communities and their 1.6 million people spirals downward with the loss of small businesses, employment, tax base, fire and police protection, and schools. We thus urge you to support not only continued levels of appropriations for the Great Lakes O&M program as directed by WRRDA, but also to support the \$20 million annual set-aside our resolution proposed for these Great Lakes small harbors.

Thank you in advance for addressing this dire situation impacting these harbor communities. We look forward to your response so that our members can share information with their constituents. Please direct all questions and correspondence to Ms. Lisa Janairo of the GLLC staff at ljanairo@csg.org or 920.458.5910.

Sincerely,



Representative Cory Mason, Wisconsin
Chair, Great Lakes Legislative Caucus



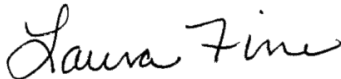
Senator Darwin Boohar, Michigan
Vice Chair, Great Lakes Legislative Caucus



Senator Melinda Bush, Illinois



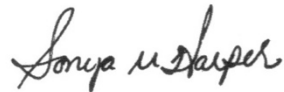
Senator Donne Trotter, Illinois



Representative Laura Fine, Illinois



Representative Robyn Gabel, Illinois



Representative Sonya Marie Harper, Illinois



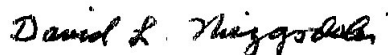
Representative John Bartlett, Indiana



Representative B. Patrick Bauer, Indiana



Representative Donna Harris, Indiana



Representative David Niezgodski, Indiana



Senator Steve Bieda, Michigan



Senator Tom Casperson, Michigan



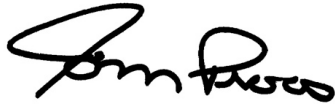
Senator Goeff Hansen, Michigan



Senator Ken Horn, Michigan



Senator Phil Pavlov, Michigan




Senator John Proos, Michigan



Senator Wayne Schmidt, Michigan



Senator Tonya Schuitmaker, Michigan



Representative Christine Greig, Michigan



Representative David Maturen, Michigan



Representative Phil Potvin, Michigan



Representative Amanda Price, Michigan



Representative Bruce Rendon, Michigan



Senator Thomas Bakk, Minnesota



Senator Chris Eaton, Minnesota



Senator Sandra Pappas, Minnesota



Senator Ann Rest, Minnesota



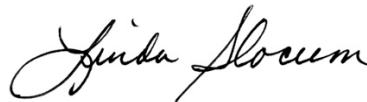
Representative Rick Hansen, Minnesota



Representative Joe Mullery, Minnesota



Representative Jennifer Schultz, Minnesota



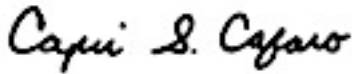
Representative Linda Slocum, Minnesota



Senator Robert Ort, New York



Assemblyman Peter Lawrence, New York



Senator Capri Cafaro, Ohio



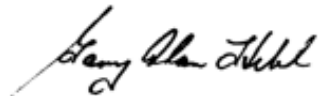
Senator Kenny Yuko, Ohio



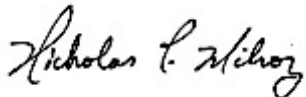
Representative Kent Smith, Ohio



Senator Janet Bewley, Wisconsin



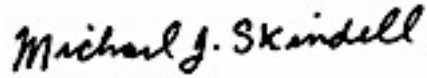
Representative Gary Hebl, Wisconsin



Representative Nick Milroy, Wisconsin



Representative Dana Wachs, Wisconsin



Senator Michael J. Skindell, Ohio



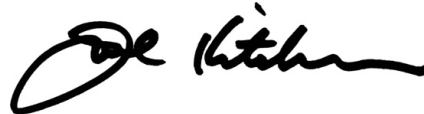
Representative Stephanie Howse, Ohio



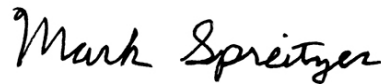
Representative Curt Sonney, Pennsylvania



Representative Joan Ballweg, Wisconsin



Representative Joel Kitchens, Wisconsin



Representative Mark Spreitzer, Wisconsin



Representative Josh Zepnick, Wisconsin

enclosure

cc: Congressional Delegations from the Great Lakes states
Governor Bruce Rauner, Illinois
Governor Mike Pence, Indiana
Governor Rick Snyder, Michigan
Governor Mark Dayton, Minnesota
Governor Andrew Cuomo, New York
Governor John Kasich, Ohio
Governor Tom Wolf, Pennsylvania
Governor Scott Walker, Wisconsin



GREAT LAKES LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

2015 Annual Meeting of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus

*Buffalo, New York
September 25-26, 2015*

Resolution on Maintaining Great Lakes Commercial and Recreational Harbors

- WHEREAS,** Great Lakes commercial and recreational harbors form an interconnected system of commerce and tourism linking the Great Lakes states and provinces together and with the rest of the world; and
- WHEREAS,** these harbors support a robust shipping and recreational boating industry within the Great Lakes; and
- WHEREAS,** domestic shippers and importers using Great Lakes and coastal harbors contribute to the annual \$1.8 billion collected in federal harbor maintenance taxes. Congress established the tax to fund harbor operation and maintenance; and
- WHEREAS,** despite a balance of \$8.7 billion in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, the Great Lakes harbor maintenance needs are not being met; and
- WHEREAS,** in 2014, Congress adopted the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) to ensure greater tax fairness by gradually phasing in from FY15 to FY24 an appropriation equal to 100 percent of annual harbor maintenance tax collections, allocating not less than 10 percent of all increased funding over FY12 levels to the Great Lakes, and directing that all federal harbors be maintained. In FY15, Congress appropriated \$100 million less than WRRDA specified, and it is anticipated that Congress's FY16 appropriation will fall short of the target in WRRDA; and
- WHEREAS,** despite passage of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act, no funding has been provided for the 71 Great Lakes recreational harbors and only 11 of 41 commercial harbors have received funding for dredging; and
- WHEREAS,** the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund is not being fully utilized and WRRDA is not being implemented as enacted; and



WHEREAS, communities with these unfunded harbors have little means to self-fund their harbor maintenance and provide for the safety of their residents or visitors on the water; and

WHEREAS, the annual cost of maintaining all 112 federal small harbors of the Great Lakes – supporting the nine million citizens within the counties these harbors anchor – is only \$20 million, which is less than one percent of the annual national harbor operations and maintenance budget; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus urges Congress to use the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund for its intended purpose and to implement the Water Resources Reform and Development Act as enacted to address the harbor maintenance needs of small Great Lakes harbors; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus urges Members of Congress from the Great Lakes states to unite in advocating for a \$20 million set aside within the annual federal harbor operations and maintenance budget for the purpose of maintaining the 112 small federal harbors of the Great Lakes; and be it further

RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to the President of the United States, Members of Congress from the Great Lakes states, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the governors of the eight Great Lakes states.

Adopted on September 26, 2015.