

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 23, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

As you begin to craft a new Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), we write to urge you to include a unified agreement on the Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) and Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) that was recently negotiated by the American Association of Port Authorities and its members, and is supported by the port industry. Our nation's economy relies on the safe and efficient movement of goods through a broad array of geographically diverse ports and harbors, and the HMT and HMTF are critical to keeping American's ports competitive and our workforce strong.

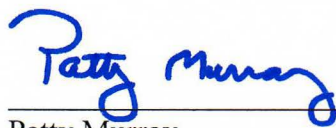
The Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014, P.L. 113-121) and the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-322) enacted several HMT and HMTF reforms to increase the use of the HMTF for operation and maintenance of federally authorized navigation channels and waterways, ensure greater equity for ports, and support the movement of goods throughout the nation. While these changes were an important step forward, this year's WRDA represents an opportunity to permanently fix the HMT and HMTF by providing a stable, sustainable, and fair funding mechanism to support America's global competitiveness. Once enacted, the industry-wide agreement would strengthen our ports, support economic growth, reduce risks by enhancing safety, and ensure an equitable allocation of the HMTF.

Today, even with the improvements made by WRRDA 2014, the HMTF continues to be underspent making it difficult to maintain our ports and harbors. The industry-wide agreement would result in permanent utilization of all of the HMT revenues collected in the HMTF each year and address long-standing concerns over the HMTF allocations. It encompasses the needs of all of our nation's ports, while providing a fair and equitable distribution of the HMTF. By requiring full use of HMT revenues on an annual basis, the agreement ensures tax fairness. The agreement further balances the needs of all regions and all ports by providing the bulk of the HMTF to support ports that require operation and maintenance, a minimum allocation by region and for small and emerging ports, and equitable return to HMT net contributors (donors) and following Congressional intent in WRRDA 2014 for donor and energy transfer ports. It also combats cargo diversion from ports in the U.S. which hurts American jobs.

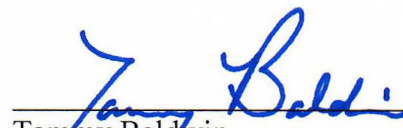
Ports account for 26 percent of the America's economy and 23 million jobs nationwide. Deteriorating harbors and waterways could significantly harm our port system through vessel groundings, harbor closures, and negative economic impacts for importers and exporters. To ensure our ports can remain competitive, we must ensure our navigation channels and waterways are maintained to the constructed depths and widths. To sustain, maintain, and strengthen our nation's port infrastructure, we respectfully request that you include the industry-wide agreement on the HMT and HMTF in this year's WRDA legislation.

We look forward to working with you on WRDA and appreciate your consideration of these important HMT and HMTF reforms.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



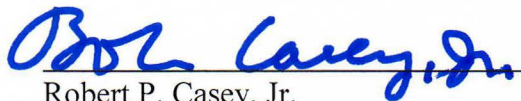
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



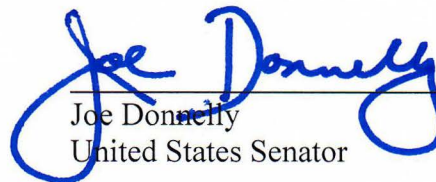
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



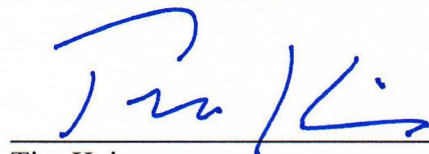
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



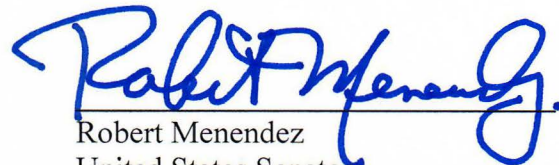
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Joe Donnelly
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator