Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2016

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
Appropriations
2362B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Simpson and Ranking Members Lowey and Kaptur:

Thank you for your efforts to increase U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Civil Works program harbor maintenance funding in your annual Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies (E&W) Appropriations Act. We were particularly pleased to see the Consolidated Appropriations Act for 2016 (P.L. 114-113) allocated $1.263 billion to the USACE for harbor maintenance, meeting the target that is included in section 2101(b)(1)(B) of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014 (P.L. 113-121).

Full use of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) is urgently needed for safe and efficient freight transportation. Congress, through WRRDA, committed to achieve full use of the HMTF through incremental increases over a ten-year period. It is with this spirit that we write to request that the House Appropriations Committee maintain at least level funding and allocate $1.263 billion again for USACE harbor maintenance activities in the House Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) E&W appropriations bill. The USACE's portion accounts for the vast majority of HMTF spending, while small amounts of HMTF funding are authorized to be provided to the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corp. and Customs and Border Protection in other appropriations bills.

The President's budget estimates that HMTF revenue will be approximately $1.662 billion for FY16. This estimate is $225 million less than last year's estimate for FY16 revenue. As a result, even though the WRRDA HMTF target percentage increases from 69% in FY16 to 71% for FY17, the WRRDA HMTF spending target for FY17 is only $1.180 billion. The USACE's portion of that target would be $1.141 billion, a $122 million reduction from the FY16 appropriated amount. While appropriating that amount would meet the letter requirement of

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WRRDA section 2101(b)(2)(B), it would be inconsistent with Congress' intent in enacting WRRDA and the needs of the nation. Therefore, we believe that annual HMTF harbor maintenance funding should not decrease until Congress achieves full use of HMTF annual revenue, at which time the annual revenue amount should dictate whether harbor maintenance funding increases or decreases each year.

Enough Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) revenue is collected each year to meet the nation's annual authorized harbor maintenance needs for harbors of all sizes. Unfortunately, harbors and navigation channels are getting narrower and shallower due to accumulating sediment, dredged material disposal area capacity is declining, and harbor structures such as breakwaters and jetties are deteriorating due to inadequate funding.

The Army Corps of Engineers has reported that authorized channel depths nationwide are available less than half of the time, and then only over half of the channel's width. This drives up the cost of U.S. exports and imports, which threatens U.S. economic growth and increases the risk of vessel groundings and associated oil spills. Many U.S. exports compete in a very price-sensitive global market where transportation inefficiencies mean losing business to other countries. Underutilization of HMT revenue threatens the continued operation of small and medium sized harbors, and some have closed due to inadequate maintenance.

Harbors and navigation channels are a vital part of our nation's transportation infrastructure, and a reduction in their capacity can have significant impacts on local communities and economies. WRRDA 2014 recognized both the national need to increase harbor maintenance spending and the local and regional economic impacts of harbors of different sizes and types of commerce.

We urge you to work with the Senate to craft a final FY17 E&W Appropriations bill that does not reduce harbor maintenance funding from the level provided by the Consolidated Appropriations Act for 2016

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress

Janice Hahn
Member of Congress

Charles W. Boustany Jr., MD
Member of Congress

Gene Green
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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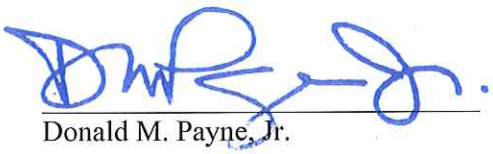

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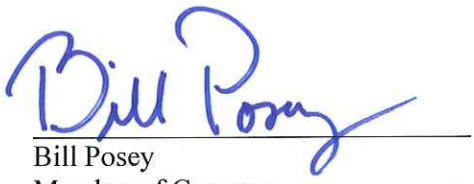

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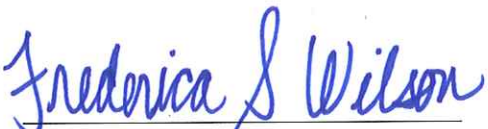

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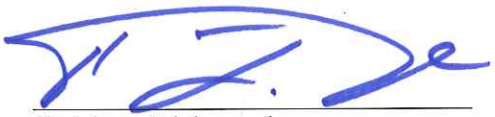

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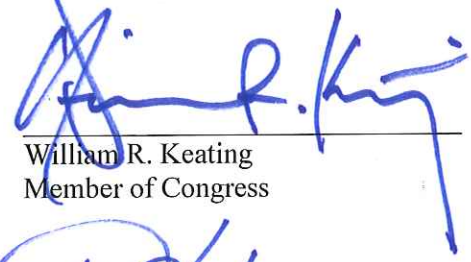

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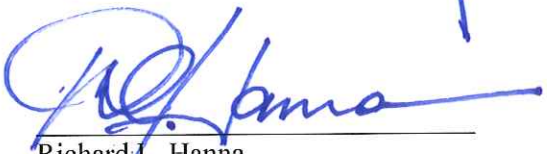

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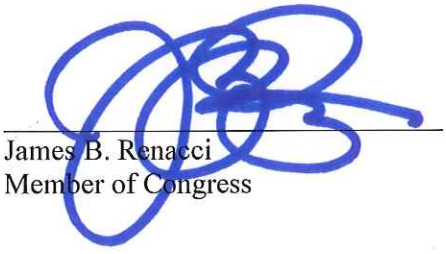

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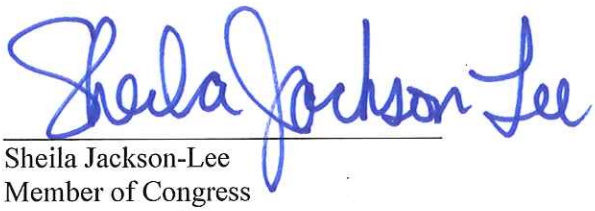

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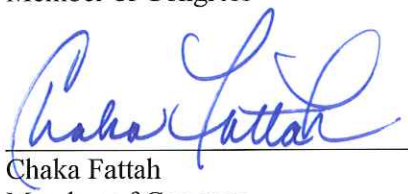

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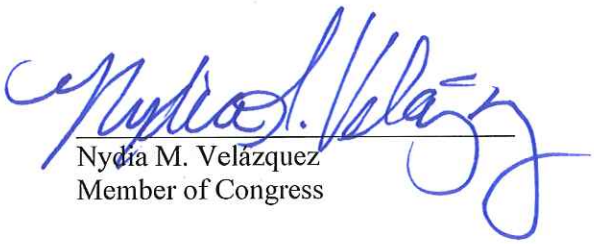

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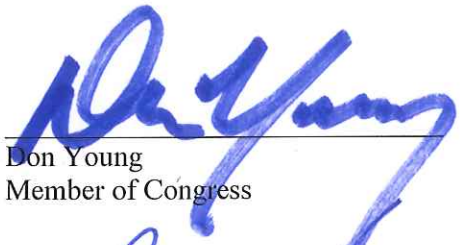

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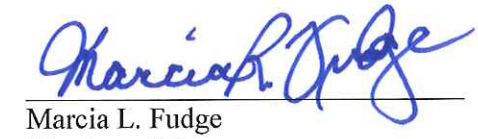

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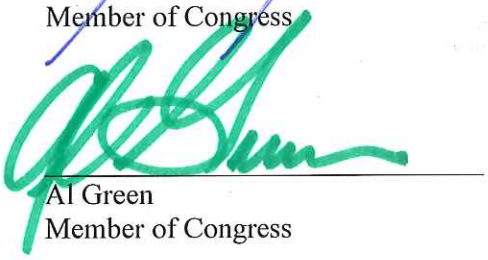

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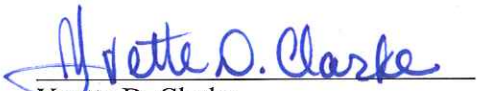

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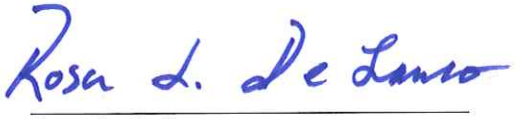

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