



A bold voice for transportation workers

September 14, 2016

Vote for the Water Resources Development Act of 2016 Support Good Paying Jobs

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to vote yes on S.2848, the Water Resources Development Act of 2016 (WRDA). We commend Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer for moving a bipartisan water resources bill that will authorize new Army Corps projects, keep American ports and harbors competitive, improve our manufacturing capacity through enhanced Buy America standards, and provide long overdue emergency aid for the drinking water crisis facing the community of Flint, Michigan.

For our ports and the workers who depend on these transportation hubs for their jobs, this legislation is desperately needed and could not come at a better time. U.S. seaports are seeing sustained increases in cargo volume and often lack the shore-side capacity to move containers efficiently to and from rail and other intermodal facilities. And with the recent completion of the expanded Panama Canal, many ports are not dredged deep enough to receive the larger ships that will increasingly become the norm in international shipping. This WRDA bill helps to meet these mounting demands by authorizing important new projects, improving the cost-share threshold for channel deepening, and increasing the expenditure of funds for port projects. Building on reforms of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF or Trust Fund) set by Congress in 2014, the bill would expedite funding for port dredging activities by requiring that the Trust Fund's annual authorized spending targets be greater than the preceding fiscal year. TTD has long advocated that funds collected by the HMTF be used for their intended purposes – on our ports and harbors – and not diverted or left unspent. We look forward to building on this provision to ensure the full expenditure of the Trust Fund.

WRDA will also maximize job creation by codifying into law a long-standing policy that domestic iron and steel products be used for public water system projects assisted by the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). By aligning Buy America requirements for the DWSRF with those currently governing clean water projects, this provision will make it easier for states to comply with federal rules, move forward with projects and create good-paying manufacturing jobs.

This authorization also provides crucial assistance to help alleviate the lead-poisoned water system of Flint, MI. While we are pleased with this important and necessary first step to fix this drinking water crisis, we are dismayed that Congress is requiring a budgetary offset in order to fund the aid program. This public health and environmental emergency should be subject to an emergency appropriation, just as Congress has done with other national emergencies.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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Edward Wytkind, President / Larry I. Willis, Secretary-Treasurer



We applaud the Senate for casting aside partisan differences and moving forward with a critical water resources authorization. We urge you to vote yes on passage and to work with your House counterparts to report a final bill this year. If you have any question or concerns, please contact me directly or TTD legislative representative Jeff Pavlak at 202/628.9262.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Wytkind', with several overlapping loops and a horizontal line at the bottom.

Edward Wytkind
President