

KEY VOTE ALERT!

May 22, 2014



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Congressional & Public Affairs
1615 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20062

202-463-5600

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting, and defending America's free enterprise system, strongly supports the conference report for H.R. 3080, the "Water Resources Reform and Development Act," and urges the House and Senate to approve this important legislation so that it can be signed into law by the President.

The Chamber applauds the House and Senate for coming together to craft critical policy and reform-focused water resources legislation that would:

- Strengthen oversight, transparency, and accountability by establishing historic reforms to the project authorization process without earmarks;
- Increase investment in America's ports by allowing ultimate full usage of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund for its intended purposes;
- Free up resources for other critical capital construction efforts along the inland waterways system by modifying the federal cost-share for the Olmsted Lock and Dam project;
- Provide protection for communities from extreme weather and natural disasters;
- Create conditions for prioritization of projects and successful project delivery;
- Streamline the feasibility study and permitting process; and,
- Increase opportunities for private investment.

In particular, the Chamber is very pleased this legislation would reform and accelerate the Army Corps' project delivery process by requiring vertical integration and consolidation of studies; expediting completion of reports and removal of duplicative analyses; requiring early coordination between all agencies that must approve a project; creating opportunities for non-federal sponsors to assume greater responsibilities in protecting public health, safety, and the environment; and establishing deadlines for action by all agencies providing materials and comments for studies and reviews.

Additionally, the Chamber supports inclusion of the provision that would make permanent the authority allowing the Secretary of the Army to accept and expend funds contributed by non-federal public entities to expedite the evaluation of permits.

The Chamber is encouraged that this bill would increase port channel depth from 45 to 50 feet before non-Federal cost-sharing is required for Operations & Maintenance (O&M), as well as amend the definition of major rehabilitation projects eligible for the Inland Waterways Trust Fund from the current law level of \$14 million to \$20 million and adjusted annually for inflation. The conference report also establishes a new 65/35 cost-sharing requirement for hurricane and storm protection projects that cross inland or intracoastal waterways and clarifies Corps of Engineers' responsibilities for those projects.

The Chamber is also encouraged that the conference report would address the issue of public-private partnerships (PPP) for delivery of water resources projects by establishing a PPP pilot program (Section 5014) and other innovative financing tools to invest in water infrastructure (Section 5023). The Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA)—modeled on the successful federal credit program for surface transportation, or TIFIA—would provide loans and loan guarantees for important water quality, drinking water and flood control projects.

While we support the conference report, the Chamber strongly opposes Section 5035, the “Buy America” provision requiring the use of American iron, steel and manufactured goods, as well as Section 5028(a)(5) that would prohibit use of both tax-exempt bonds and WIFIA assistance on the same project. The Chamber is also disappointed by the omission of the recommendation made by the Inland Waterway Users Board to provide predictable, reliable, and sustainable revenues to the Inland Waterways Trust Fund. The Chamber looks forward to working with Congress to address the gap between needs and resources on the inland waterways.

Congress has the opportunity—for the first time in seven years—to complete a WRDA reauthorization and send it to the President for his signature. Doing so would kick-start strategic investment in our ports and inland waterways, increasing American competitiveness and creating hundreds of thousands of high-paying U.S. jobs. **The Chamber strongly supports the H.R. 3080 conference report. The Chamber will consider including votes on, or in relation to, H.R. 3080 in our annual How They Voted scorecard.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten", written in a cursive style.

R. Bruce Josten