



Oppose Unrelated Harbor Maintenance Funding Provisions in Upcoming Disaster Supplemental Appropriations Bill

May 20, 2019

Dear Senator:

We urge you to oppose efforts to insert an unrelated provision dealing with harbor maintenance funding and use into the upcoming disaster supplemental appropriations bill. Leaving aside other possible concerns our organizations may have with the supplemental appropriations, a debate about the financial management of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund is neither disaster-related nor an emergency and should be rejected out of hand.

The Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund receives revenue from an *ad valorem* tax on imports and has received far more revenue than has been spent in recent years. The appropriate response to that is to reform the major cross-subsidies or reduce the tax rate or both. An inappropriate response would be to create mechanisms that will automatically increase trust fund spending while masking the fiscal impact of this effective increase.

It is well understood a number of lawmakers want to both increase spending from the trust fund and expand the fund into paying for responsibilities, including elements of construction, that are not currently a federal responsibility. It is also true that lawmakers have failed to include such drastic expansions in any of the water resource authorizations that have been adopted in recent Congresses. Hijacking a disaster supplemental to achieve long-desired policy changes that lawmakers have rejected when provided the opportunity on the appropriate legislative vehicle, is cynical and fiscally irresponsible.

Further, this effort would explicitly allow increases in other discretionary spending by not adjusting the overall spending caps or including real spending offsets. The Senate should reject such budget gimmicks, as well as any effort to modify the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund in the emergency spending supplemental.

**Taxpayers for Common Sense
Americans for Prosperity
Council for Citizens Against Government Waste
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