



For Immediate Release

January 25, 2013

Contact: David Naftzger
Office: 312-407-0177
Mobile: 847-863-1679
dnaftzger@cglg.org

**GOVERNORS APPLAUD INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION
TO FIX HARBORS**

Chicago, IL – The Great Lakes Governors today applauded recently introduced legislation in Congress that would permanently fix the nation’s dysfunctional funding program to maintain ports and harbors. Specifically, the Governors pledged their support for the Realize America's Maritime Promise (RAMP) Act, H.R. 335, and commended the sponsors for their leadership in introducing this bill. Once enacted, this legislation will immediately help to put Americans to work on improving ports and harbors, while representing a long-term investment to enhance both the nation’s and the region’s global economic competitiveness.

Governor Rick Snyder of Michigan, Co-Chair of the Council of Great Lakes Governors, said, “I applaud the Congressmen for working to enact what is really a simple solution to a major problem—actually spending funds already collected for the purpose of harbor maintenance on harbor maintenance. This solution is critical for our region’s ports and harbors, and for the national economy.”

Governor Pat Quinn of Illinois, Co-Chair of the Council of Great Lakes Governors, said, “Congress must act to provide relief to our harbors. Drought and low water levels have created a crisis that is only compounded by the failure to spend federal funds that have already been collected and set aside for just this purpose.”

The Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) was created in 1986 to establish a dedicated funding source for dredging and other required maintenance of the nation’s coastal harbors. Cargo vessels are assessed a user fee on imported and domestic cargo arriving at U.S. ports and harbors. Recent annual revenue from these fees has totaled about \$1.5 billion, but only about half of that amount has been spent on its intended purpose. This trend has led to inadequate dredging of harbors and ports, which forces ships to carry lighter cargo loads and increases the cost per ton to move cargo. As the Great Lakes water levels reach historic lows, this problem has been exacerbated and hindered job creation, economic growth and competitiveness.

The President’s FFY 2013 budget includes \$31 million for dredging Great Lakes harbors but the federal government estimates that about twice this amount is needed in this year alone. Further, the total backlog of dredging needs for Great Lakes harbors totals approximately \$200 million. Failure to address these needs jeopardizes our region’s ports, particularly smaller ports that provide the livelihood of many smaller cities and towns. For instance, the ports of Waukegan, Illinois, and St. Joseph, Michigan, recently faced closure because of inadequate dredging.

This legislation will ensure that all funds deposited into the trust fund in a given fiscal year are fully expended. A broad, national coalition supports this long-term solution to more closely tie trust fund expenditures to revenues, maintain the nation's ports and harbors, and bolster the American economy.

More information on the Council of Great Lakes Governors is available at www.cglg.org.

###