

## **FULLY UTILIZE THE HARBOR MAINTENANCE TRUST FUND**

- The Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) was established in 1986 to fund the operation and maintenance of ports and harbors and is funded by the Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT).
- Appropriations from the HMTF, which are primarily used by the Army Corps of Engineers for maintenance dredging, dredged material disposal areas, jetties, and breakwaters, have lagged behind revenues for several years. The HMTF surplus was more than \$5 billion at the end of FY09 and continues to grow by hundreds of millions of dollars each year.
- Due to inadequate appropriations from the HMTF, navigation channels are getting narrower and shallower from sediment accumulation. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently reported that almost 30 percent of commercial vessel calls at U.S. ports are constrained due to inadequate channel depths. This means vessels laden with American-made goods cannot carry all they are capable of holding because they would be too heavy to keep from running aground, nor can ships with imports for the U.S. market enter many ports due to the same concerns. This drives up the cost of our nation's exports and imports.
- Inadequately maintained harbors are becoming like blocked arteries, threatening to choke off the lifeblood of our economy. With our economy trying to recover from a major recession, America's international trade must not be run aground because available funding for needed and regular dredging of America's commercial waterways was withheld.
- Tens of thousands of good-paying American jobs would be created or maintained by using HMTF revenues for their intended purpose: maintaining America's waterways.
- Enough HMTF revenue is collected each year to meet all of the nation's authorized harbor maintenance needs, but less than two-thirds of it is appropriated for harbor maintenance.
- To ensure that funding entering the Trust Fund is spent for its intended purpose, Congressman Bart Stupak (D-MI) and Congressman Charles Boustany (R-LA) introduced H.R.4844, bipartisan legislation with 49 cosponsors that Chairman Jim Oberstar of the House Transportation and Infrastructure has included in his panel's mark-up of the Water Resources Development Act of 2010. Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) introduced companion legislation in the Senate, S.3213, and the bill now has 15 sponsors. These bills solve this problem the same way the Congress did for the Highway Trust Fund in TEA-21 and the Airports and Airways Trust Fund in AIR-21. They legislatively tie HMTF appropriations to HMTF revenue through a guarantee and a point of order without incurring a CBO "pay go" score.
- The bipartisan legislation is supported by a broad national coalition ranging from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to major labor unions.