

National Waterways Conference, Inc.

NEWS

HOUSE APPROVES CRUCIAL WATERWAY LEGISLATION

WASHINGTON July 14, 2005- This afternoon the United States House of Representatives approved, by a vote of 406-14, the bi-partisan Water Resources Development Act of 2005, H.R. 2864, that authorizes 700 transportation, flood control, hydropower, water supply, beach renourishment, environmental restoration and recreation projects and studies. Should all of the projects be funded in future appropriations bills, \$10 billion in water resources infrastructure would be built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It fixes the “potholes” in the river system, stated Congressman Ray LaHood of Illinois.

According to Congr. Jerry Costello of Illinois, there has never been another bill before the House floor that was supported by such a diverse coalition of waterway interests, including labor and business. Copies of letters sent by the National Waterways Alliance in support of the legislation can be found on the website of the National Waterways Conference, which serves as the group’s secretariat: www.waterways.org.

Also accepted was an amendment sponsored by Congr. Bart Stupak of Michigan, Pete Hoekstra of Michigan and Bill Delahunt of Massachusetts that would allow 293 so-called “lower-use” harbors which handle over 2/3 of the cargo traveling on the waterways of America to be dredged through a change in the performance based-budgeting guidelines.

Worth Hager, president of the National Waterways Conference said, “We are thrilled the House of Representatives has so resoundingly affirmed the importance of water resources to the Nation. In addition to authorizing crucial projects, including the modernization of the locks on the Upper Mississippi system, the House has provided a sound and reasonable version of Corps reform which, when coupled with the reforms the Corps of Engineers has already instituted, will do much to ensure that future projects are shielded from unwarranted attacks on their economics.”

During the debate, a controversial amendment sponsored by Congr. Earl Blumenauer of Oregon and Jeff Flake of Arizona that had the potential to be detrimental to the improvement and restoration of the 80-year old Upper Mississippi River System was defeated by a vote of 105-315 with 14 non-voting. According to Congr. Marion Berry of Arkansas, passage of WRDA and defeat of the Flake-Blumenauer amendment allows the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to have the ability to “maintain and improve the Nation’s ability to have a water super highway to the world market.” Congr. Kenny Hulshof of Missouri echoed Berry’s statements and vigorously laid out the need to modernize the system, citing the loss of 10% of capacity per year due to old age. Both alluded to the fact that one half of the cost of construction and major rehabilitation of the lock projects would be borne by the users of the system through a 20-cents per gallon fuel tax.

Also defeated, by a vote of 111-310, was an amendment sponsored by Congr. Dana Rohrabacher of California that would have allowed for fees on import containers for security purposes. The amendment was widely renounced by a number of shipper and port groups for a variety of reasons, including duplication of purposes and the processes required under the amendment.

Hager expressed her gratitude and optimism for the bill and its support saying, “In particular, the members of the National Waterways Conference thank Chairmen Don Young and Jimmy Duncan, and the ranking members, Jim Oberstar and Eddie Bernice Johnson, and the former ranking subcommittee member, Jerry Costello, for their efforts to bring

forth a truly bi-partisan bill that can be easily conferenced with the Senate bill, should that bill retain its current form.”

The Senate version of a Water Resources Development Act, S. 728, has already passed the Environment and Public Works Committee and is expected to go to the Senate floor for passage in the near future.

“We are looking forward to the Senate now following the lead of the House so that we can finally have a Water Resources Development Act of 2005, thus ending the stalemate that has delayed the regular biennial passage of a WRDA bill,” stated Bob Portiss, Chairman of the National Waterways Conference and port director of the Tulsa Port of Catoosa.

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NWC is the nationwide "umbrella" water resources organization of waterways shippers, industry and regional associations, port authorities, barge lines, shipyards, economic development agencies and others joined together since 1960 to promote a greater understanding of the public benefits of the waterways system and its contributions to a sound economy, industrial and agricultural productivity, regional development, environmental quality, energy conservation, international trade, national security and the overall public interest. Visit our website: www.waterways.org.

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