



New Orleans-Baton Rouge Steamship Pilots Association

2805 Harvard Avenue, Suite 102 • Metairie, Louisiana 70006 • USA

June 26, 2012

The Honorable Cedric Richmond
U.S. House of Representatives
415 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Richmond:

First, let me begin by thanking you for the outstanding work being done by you and your staff with regard to the increase of the deep-draft channel of the Mississippi River to 50 feet. Your "forward thinking" and "can do" attitude on this matter is an inspiration to us all.

The New Orleans-Baton Rouge Steamship Pilots Association has a firm belief that in order for the United States to compete on an international level with respect to shipping, we must have a deep-draft limit at least equal to that of the Panama Canal. Currently, vessels that load in the Mississippi River with plans to transit the Panama Canal are limited to 39 feet 6 inches even though the Mississippi River can often load to 47 feet. Simply stated, **WE ARE LIMITED BY THE PANAMA CANAL'S LIMITATIONS.** If we do not reach a depth of 50 feet by 2014, when the "new" Panama Canal opens, they will be limited by us. It will not take long for many shippers to find ports that are not limited to less draft than the Panama Canal.

As you well know, the Mississippi River is the conduit of goods being shipped for thirty-one states and two Canadian provinces. This equates to an economic impact of nearly \$115 billion on the United States economy. By increasing the draft to 50 feet, that economic horsepower has the potential to substantially increase which would be of benefit to the entire nation as a whole. President Obama has stated that he wishes to double trade over a five-year period. The quickest, easiest, and most cost-effective manner in which to obtain his goal would be to increase the deep-draft channel of the Mississippi River. The bill that you have drafted is an absolute necessity if this nation is to attempt to meet the President's goal.

Main Office

Phone: 504-832-1199

Billing Fax: 504-455-4328

Board of Directors

Phone: 504-219-2600

Fax: 504-456-6456

Marine Operations

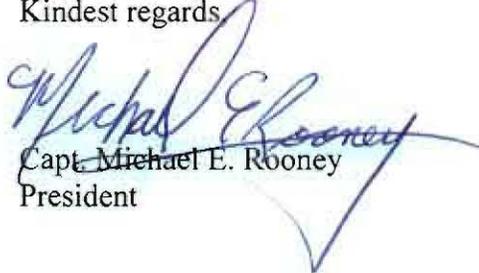
Phone: 504-219-2611

Fax: 504-455-2942

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Once again, thank you for the work that you and your staff have done thus far on this matter. It is because of legislators such as you that we have become and always will be a great nation.

Kindest regards



Capt. Michael E. Rooney
President

MER/lbs