

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 04, 2011

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Panetta:

The return of our servicemen and women from Iraq in time for the holidays is most welcome. As the Department of Defense determines the logistics of our departure from that part of the world, we ask that you provide for full consideration and fair allocation of waterborne cargo through the ports of the Great Lakes and the Saint Lawrence Seaway.

Well over half the final destinations for returning materiel and personnel goods can be cost-effectively reached from ports on the Great Lakes. Bringing cargo by water to our region provides an efficient option for the Department of Defense and can then be transferred to rail, road, or air transportation, which are all available from our ports.

Currently, ports in the Great Lakes are working at 50 to 60 percent capacity. This underutilization means there is significant availability for additional Department of Defense traffic through the ports that could begin immediately without pushing aside private businesses. Rather, increased operations generated by military cargo shipments would provide a much-needed economic boost in the region.

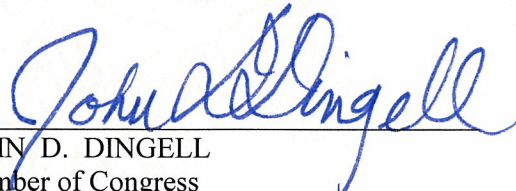
With the significant manufacturing losses in our region, our returning soldiers are having an especially difficult time finding employment. The jobs that would be created by returning military shipments could provide new employment opportunities for which these veterans would be especially qualified.

In the past, as the Department of Defense has wound down overseas military operations, the Great Lakes ports have been overlooked, despite their capabilities. We ask that as plans are established for the exit from Iraq, you identify ways to include the ports of the Great Lakes to receive waterborne cargo shipments.

Sincerely,




MARCY KAPTUR
Member of Congress



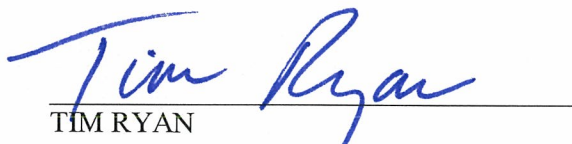
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