**AAPA Communications Awards Submission**

**Category: Newsletters**

**Summary of Entry:** An engaging digital update sent quarterly to legislators at the local, state and federal levels.

1. **What are/were the entry’s specific communications challenges or opportunities?**

In its 2016 budget, the Commonwealth of Virginia included $350 million for expanding capacity at Norfolk International Terminals (NIT), which is the port's largest terminal. When complete, NIT’s south berth will be converted to a Rail Mounted Gantry Crane operation and increase its capacity by 46% - without adding a square inch to the terminal’s property.

Additionally, The Port of Virginia is continuing its efforts to ensure its waterside infrastructure is capable of handling the Ultra Large Container Vessels (ULCVs) that are now calling the US East Coast. The approved plan recommends deepening Norfolk Harbor to 55 feet, Thimble Shoal Channel to 56 feet, the Atlantic Ocean Channel to 59 feet, and widening Thimble Shoal Channel east of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel from 1,000 to 1,300 feet.

1. **How does the communication used in this entry complement the organization’s overall mission?**

As we continue to move forward with our projects on land and the water, it is critical to ensure that those responsible for providing funding understand the importance of the maritime industry and our effect on the economy.

1. **What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?**

Our government affairs team drafts brief articles that are then paired with compelling imagery in an engaging, digital newsletter format to capture readers’ attention and help educate them. We create an editorial calendar for the year and ensure that the articles being written make sense from a timing perspective. For example, the most recent newsletter was distributed just before the end of the General Assembly session in an attempt to educate legislators as to the importance of including funding in the budget to support or channel deepening and widening efforts.

1. **What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?**
	1. **Explain what strategies were developed to achieve success and why these strategies were chosen.**

As we continue to move forward with our projects on land and the water, it is critical to ensure that those responsible for providing funding understand the importance of the maritime industry and our effect on the economy.

The Port of Virginia is committed to providing updates to our legislators on every level to keep them current on how we are using the dollars invested in our terminals, and how the efforts we are undertaking will provide returns on investments for years to come in terms of job creation.

* 1. **Specify the tactics used (i.e., actions used to carry out your strategies).**

Our government affairs team drafts brief articles that are then paired with compelling imagery in an engaging, digital newsletter format to capture readers’ attention and help educate them.

* 1. **Detail the entry’s implementation plan by including timeline, staffing and outsourcing used.**

We create an editorial calendar for the year and ensure that the articles being written make sense from a timing perspective. For example, the most recent newsletter was distributed just before the end of the General Assembly session in an attempt to educate legislators as to the importance of including funding in the budget to support or channel deepening and widening efforts.

1. **What were the communications outcomes from this entry and what evaluation methods were used to assess them?**

The Q1 2018 Legislative Update has just over 100 views – about a 25% open rate based on the total distribution list. Previous updates included videos and articles. However, in late 2017, we asked our readers via an informal survey how they preferred to receive their information and were surprised to hear that they overwhelmingly preferred to get the info as articles. Why? Because they copy and paste the information into briefs they provide their respective legislators or committees – making it easy to use the information we’re sharing.

To view the latest edition of the Legislative Update, please click this link: <http://bit.ly/Q118POVLegislativeUpdate>