

February 22, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510
c/o Ben Hammond

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-305 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515
c/o Dale Oak

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510
c/o Bob Putnam

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
c/o Chris Bigelow, Jr.

RE: Funding Support for FY 2017 and FY 2018 NOAA Programs

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Members Leahy and Lowey:

We are writing in support of funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Navigation, Observations, and Positioning programs as Congress finalizes appropriations for FY 2017 and considers funding levels for FY 2018. We urge you to support these essential federal programs within NOAA's National Ocean Service as well as its marine weather forecasting capabilities, including the National Data Buoy Center of NOAA's National Weather Service. We also urge you to support operations and maintenance for NOAA's aging hydrographic fleet, and to ensure NOAA's current and future investments in new vessels include new hydrographic vessels.

The nation's seaports are economic gateways to America's international trade and interstate commerce. Collectively, U.S. seaports sustain employment for more than 23 million U.S. workers. The total value of economic activity related to America's ports is \$4.6 trillion, representing 26% of the U.S. economy. More than 99 percent of overseas trade transits through our seaports – including agricultural, mineral, and manufactured exports. Every day tankers and barges transport more than nine million barrels of oil through our ports and harbors.

We understand the current fiscal climate and appreciate the difficult choices you face. As we work to strengthen and build our economy, we need to prioritize investments that fulfill essential federal missions to enhance safety, protect life and property, and enhance the ability of U.S. industries and exporters to compete in the increasingly competitive global marketplace. Modest investments in NOAA's Navigation, Observations and Positioning services will do that by providing a consistent national network of baseline scientific data and tools to mariners and other coastal decision makers.

The need for highly accurate NOAA charts as well as real time and forecast services from NOAA has never been greater. Ever-larger vessels are challenging the limits of our waterways and ports. In December 2015, the largest container ship to ever dock at a North American port arrived at the Port of Los Angeles. At 1,200 feet long, the *Benjamin Franklin* spans about four football fields and is wider than an Olympic-size swimming pool. In addition, the Panama and Suez Canal expansions are resulting in larger vessels visiting more U.S. ports.

NOAA's products enable ports, manufacturers, shippers, exporters and supply chain experts to strategically plan shipping routes and vessel arrivals and departures. They comprise an important component of the "information infrastructure" upon which modern commerce and business increasingly depend. NOAA's services are also the first line of defense against marine accidents and associated pollution. These services fulfill long-standing federal roles and responsibilities to advance and support trade and commerce as recognized by Congress in the Coast and Geodetic Survey Act and the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act. In addition, these data, products and services are proving to be an essential source of information for other coastal interests, including coastal and port planners and emergency responders.

One particular area of concern remains the chronic underfunding for operations and maintenance of NOAA's Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System or "PORTS." The Administration's FY 2017 request is again far short of meeting federal responsibilities. This program is vital to the safe navigation of federal waters and channels and our international competitiveness. It is a vital source of real-time information available to mariners and pilots on specific channel conditions. In addition, we urge you to encourage the Administration to build on the recent pilot project in Long Beach, California, and to provide support for NOAA to further engage industry in partnerships to develop and implement more of these next generation decision support tools.

We appreciate your recognition of the critical importance of ports and their vital role in the U.S. transportation system and economy. Please let us know whenever AAPA and our member ports may be of any assistance.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Kurt Nagle
President & CEO

cc: Hayley Alexander, Majority Staff, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Jennifer Eskra, Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Leslie Albright, Majority Staff, House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Bob Bonner, Minority Staff, House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies