

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 26, 2014

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Hatch:

We are writing to urge you to support the proposed user fee increase on commercial barge operators to help fund the repair and replacement of navigation locks and dams on the inland waterways system.

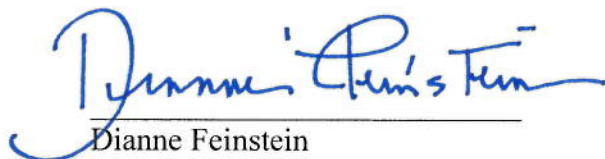
The proposed user fee increase is strongly supported by the commercial barge industry, and raises Inland Waterways Trust Fund revenues by an estimated \$270 million over ten years according to the Joint Committee on Taxation. This revenue is achieved by increasing the user fee from the current 20 cents per gallon to 29 cents per gallon.

The Inland Waterways Trust Fund pays 50 percent of the costs for construction and major rehabilitation of navigation locks and dams on the inland waterways system. The other 50 percent of project costs is paid by taxpayers. The fund is currently supported by a 20 cent per gallon tax on marine diesel, which is only charged to commercial users of the waterways. The 20 cent per gallon tax has not been increased since 1995 and the Inland Waterways Trust Fund only takes in \$85 to \$95 million annually.

Funding in the Inland Waterways Trust Fund is insufficient to meet the backlog of construction needs. There is almost \$5 billion in backlogged construction repairs or replacement work that needs to be completed on the inland waterways according to Waterways Council, Inc., a national group made up of industrial users of the inland waterway system who are proposing to increase the user fee.

We urge the Committee to support the proposed user fee increase, and we are ready to work with you to make sure this program continues to have the support needed to modernize our nation's waterways.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Lamar Alexander  
United States Senator