

during crises to mitigate any subsequent negative effects.

As we slowly start to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, economic recovery is at the top of countries' national agendas. From the outset, it has been considered vital that legitimate consignments of important goods in the context of this health crisis, such as COVID-19 vaccines and other related situationally critical medicines, be cleared at borders as quickly and safely as possible.

Against this backdrop, two approaches have contributed significantly to efficient cargo clearance by customs agencies around the world: coordinated border management and single-window systems. While coordinated border management is the concept by which border agencies join forces to combine, to the greatest extent possible, their requirements into a single streamlined approach, single-window is the most highly evolved form of this approach,

essentially consisting of a "one-window, one-submission" facility to expedite border formalities.

Under the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) initiative, the WCO and other international organizations have developed a Joint Indicative List of Critical COVID-19 Vaccine Inputs, indicating product classification references based on the 2017 version of the WCO Harmonized System (HS). Once these references have been incorporated into WCO members' single-window systems, it becomes much easier to monitor the cross-border movement and release of COVID-19 vaccines and shipments of related medical supplies.

In response to the current global challenges faced, coordinated border management and single-window systems will be pivotal in facilitating the customs clearance not only of cargo containing COVID-19-related goods, but also of cargo that will sustain the growth of international trade.

### World Shipping Council

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Looking back, 2021 will be remembered as the year of COVID-19-driven supply chain congestion,

but it can also be seen as the year when US supply chains proved their resilience.

There is no doubting the frustrations and business dislocations caused by COVID-19-related operational disruptions and the sustained surge in US consumer demand. But these dislocations have occurred at a time when the international ocean supply chain has successfully delivered not just the usual volumes but a 32 percent increase in the number of

containers handled in North America, according to Drewry's 3Q 2021 *Container Forecaster* report. Global container volumes in 2021 are projected to rise more than 8 percent from 2020, according to the maritime analyst.

Despite all the problems, cargo is moving.

The congestion seen today is different from prior bouts in that there is no one bottleneck slowing cargo flow. Instead, the whole

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supply chain is oversaturated, and there are multiple bottlenecks.

That means every actor in the chain must make extraordinary efforts, including receivers at final destination, where cargo is piling up and pushing congestion back through the chain.

For their part, the most important actions regulators can take today are to facilitate crew changes and to ensure that government processes that affect the import and export of cargo are efficient and fully staffed. Together with continued investment in logistics infrastructure, this will contribute to resilient global supply chains in the long term.

What the government does not do is equally important. Supply chain congestion is not caused by a lack of regulation or government policies, and more regulation will not make the congestion go away. The US Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) has strong authority to address any violations, but having the government take control over service contracts and deciding how carriers should load ships — measures that have been proposed in Congress — can only cause harm. **JOC**

### Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI)

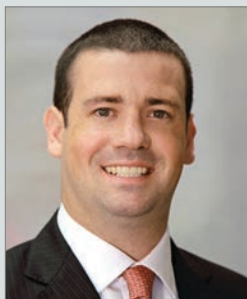
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In mid-November, President Biden signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the funding from which, combined with full annual appropriations for inland waterways lock and dam project construction, will provide more than \$4 billion over the next five years for priority waterways construction and major rehabilitation projects.

In addition, the bill allocated \$4 billion for the operations and maintenance (O&M) account of the US Army Corps of Engineers, the agency that manages the inland waterways, to allow for dredging and other inland waterways O&M projects to compete for funding.

Inland waterways transportation is critical to the nation's supply chain and benefits American farmers, shippers, manufacturers, steel and energy



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producers, agribusinesses, construction firms, towboat operators, and US consumers.

The country continues to face tougher global competition, and infrastructure is directly linked to winning on the world stage. The inland waterways that facilitate efficient transportation for US shippers of bulk commodities rely on locks and dams that were largely constructed in the 1930s during the New Deal.

America needs a similar investment now to repair and modernize our foundational infrastructure that includes inland waterways' locks and dams. The infrastructure bill is a chance to create and sustain jobs, continue to enhance our balance of trade in the agriculture sector, transport energy products that keep us moving, and upgrade our world-class waterways transportation system.

Further, it's an opportunity to remember that the fourth "R" — for rivers, along with roads, rails, and runways — remains right for America.