

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 29, 2015

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy  
Assistant Secretary for Civil Works  
Department of the Army  
108 Army Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Secretary Darcy,

We write to highlight two important projects at the Port of Virginia that are currently under consideration for inclusion in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Work Plans for Fiscal Year 2015, which are to be submitted to Congress by February 11, 2015.

As you know, dredging Norfolk Harbor and Channels to 55 feet will support the regional and national maritime economy by preparing the waterways for the new, larger cargo ships that will soon sail through the expanded Panama Canal. Norfolk's Harbor and Channels are currently 50 feet deep and are authorized to be deepened to 55 feet. At this time, Norfolk Harbor is the only U.S. East Coast location authorized to 55 feet.

Deepening of the existing 50 foot channels began more than 30 years ago. Since then, cargo and military ships have grown substantially, accelerating the Panama Canal Expansion's construction. The largest container ships calling at the Port are forced to arrive and depart at high tides. A 55 feet deep channel will allow these ships to fully utilize their available capacity, increase their cargo capacities, and reduce their costs, making them more competitive in international markets. The deeper channel is estimated to accrue \$1.7 billion in economic benefits, more than 100 times the additional investment in the Port of Virginia.

The first step for 55 foot dredging is the Army Corps's General Reevaluation Study, which costs \$3 million and is funded equally by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the federal government. Virginia has appropriated its \$1.5 million share for the study and as of the end of calendar year 2014, \$1.2 million has been appropriated by the federal government for its share. If the Army Corps of Engineers fails to include the remaining \$300,000 in its Fiscal Year 2015 Work Plans, timely completion of this important project will be put at risk.

We have also been made aware that an additional \$16.01 million in funding could be used to fully maintain Thimble Shoal Channel, Norfolk Harbor Channel (Sewells Points to Lamberts Bend), and the Channel to Newport News, all to a depth of 52 feet. This would include two feet of advanced maintenance dredging. Current processes require the use of just-in-time dredging, which puts maintaining existing channel depths at risk. This risk also jeopardizes the ability for the 55 foot dredging project to stay on schedule and on budget. At a minimum, local officials believe that an additional \$6 million is the smallest additional amount needed to maintain safe and navigable channels.

Improving and maintaining Norfolk Harbor and Channels so that the Port of Virginia can receive larger ships is essential to Virginia's position in the world economy. Ensuring that the Port's channels remain navigable and preparing the channels for expansion will also create business opportunities and jobs throughout Virginia and the United States.

We appreciate your consideration and the attention that you give to the Port of Virginia in finalizing the Fiscal Year 2015 Work Plans.

Sincerely,



Mark Warner  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



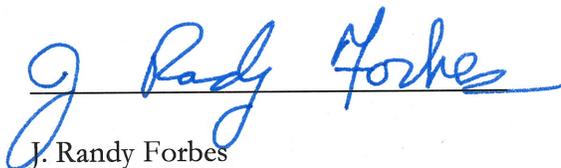
Robert J. Wittman  
Member of Congress



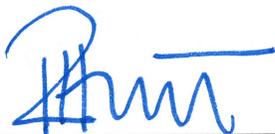
Scott Rigell  
Member of Congress



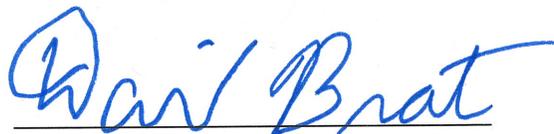
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress



J. Randy Forbes  
Member of Congress



Robert Hurt  
Member of Congress



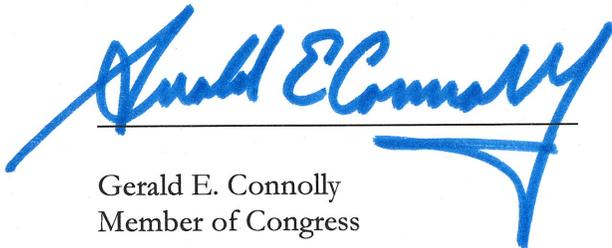
Dave Brat  
Member of Congress



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Barbara Comstock  
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Gerald E. Connolly  
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