Dear Chairmen Shuster and Ranking Member DeFazio:

We write to emphasize the importance of the Great Lakes Navigation System (GLNS) as the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure looks to write a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) this year. The GLNS plays an essential role in the daily commerce of the Great Lakes region, often serving as the least expensive mode of shipping in the Midwest. It saves American customers $3.6 billion annually in freight costs, while also creating jobs for our manufacturers, construction workers, and energy providers.

The Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014) recognized the importance of the GLNS by providing an allocation of 10% of annual “priority” Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) spending for the GLNS. Since the Senate and House Appropriations Committees do not assign funds specifically as either “baseline” or “priority” HMTF funding, however, HMTF allocations must be authorized to apply to both in order for Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) legislation to provide effective guidance to the Appropriations process. WRRDA 2014 did this only for “emerging harbors”. We ask that you provide the same treatment for the GLNS in the 2016 WRDA reauthorization as WRRDA 2014 did for “emerging harbors”. Please find attached the specific legislative language we request.

GLNS funding is critical to the financial and commercial health of the Great Lakes region. More than 17 million cubic yards of sediment remain to be dredged from navigation channels, and a repeat of the unexpected closures of the MacArthur Lock and Poe Lock at Sault Ste. Marie, MI experienced in the summer of 2015 could seriously damage our economy. Our attached request would help to providing an adequate and stable rate of operations and maintenance funding for the GLNS. As you work on 2016 WRDA reauthorization legislation, we urge you to recognize the importance of investing in the GLNS and the critical impact it has on our economy.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter  
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee  
Member of Congress
Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress

Sean P. Duffy  
Member of Congress

Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Glenn Grothman  
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan  
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Mike Bishop  
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Peter J. Visclosky  
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Richard M. Nolan  
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Bill Johnson  
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Robert E. Latta  
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Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge  
Member of Congress

Dan Benishek, M.D.  
Member of Congress