
SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 8017

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2016 Regular Session

By Senators Roach, Dammeier, O'Ban, and Warnick

Read first time 01/20/16. Referred to Committee on Trade & Economic Development.

1 TO THE HONORABLE BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
2 AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF
3 REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
4 THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED:

5 We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of
6 the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled,
7 respectfully represent and petition as follows:

8 WHEREAS, The federal harbor maintenance tax is assessed on the
9 value of goods being shipped into United States ports; and

10 WHEREAS, The harbor maintenance tax is not collected on trans-
11 pacific cargo shipped to the United States via rail or roads from
12 ports in Mexico and Canada; and

13 WHEREAS, The ability to move trans-pacific cargo through Canadian
14 ports and avoid paying the harbor maintenance tax is an incentive to
15 divert cargo away from United States ports; and

16 WHEREAS, The federal maritime commission inquiry into the harbor
17 maintenance tax found that up to half of United States bound
18 containers coming into Canada's west coast ports could revert to
19 using United States west coast ports if United States importers were
20 relieved from paying the tax; and

21 WHEREAS, Revenue raised through the harbor maintenance tax pays
22 for dredging and other maintenance costs, with significant amounts
23 being spent for dredging at east coast and Gulf ports; and

1 WHEREAS, Certain deep water ports on the west coast that require
2 no or little dredging, including the new Northwest Seaport Alliance
3 consisting of the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, receive just over a
4 penny on every dollar of harbor maintenance tax paid by shippers who
5 use their ports; and

6 WHEREAS, With the recent widening of the Panama Canal and
7 potential addition of a canal in Nicaragua, Washington ports face
8 increasing competition for maritime goods bound for the United
9 States; and

10 WHEREAS, Washington ports are ready to compete on a level playing
11 field to efficiently move goods to market;

12 NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that:

13 (1) Congress pass and the president sign legislation reforming
14 the harbor maintenance tax; and

15 (2) Such legislation ensures that United States tax policy does
16 not disadvantage United States ports and maritime cargo, and provides
17 greater equity for harbor maintenance tax donor ports through
18 expanded uses of the harbor maintenance revenues.

19 BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately
20 transmitted to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United
21 States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the
22 House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the State
23 of Washington.

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