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Contact: Senator Levin's Office
Phone: 202.224.6221

Levin Introduces Bipartisan Bill to Ensure Greater Funding for Critical Harbor and Port Maintenance

Thirteen Senators Co-Sponsor Harbor Maintenance Act of 2011

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., introduced a bipartisan bill this week designed to fund critical operations and maintenance of the nation's harbors, including significant needs in the Great Lakes System. The Harbor Maintenance Act of 2011 would require funds in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund be spent for their intended purpose rather than rerouted into the general tax fund.

Levin introduced the bill with Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, and a bipartisan group of 12 other senators.

"The harbors and ports in the Great Lakes and around the country are critical hubs for the transportation of massive amounts of goods, including food, energy, and manufacturing supplies. Their poor maintenance is a threat not only for shipping, but to every industry and family in America that consumes the goods flowing through them," Levin said. "The Harbor Maintenance Act of 2011 is a sensible proposal that simply requires that money collected for harbor and port maintenance is actually spent on those needs."

The Harbor Maintenance Act of 2011 would require that money in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund be used for maintenance and operations of federal ports, instead of being redirected to other uses.

The Army Corps of Engineers estimates that the nation's 59 busiest ports are available less than 35 percent of the time because they are inadequately maintained.

The Great Lakes System has a dredging backlog of 18 million cubic yards and a variety of other operations and maintenance projects needed to ensure efficient shipping in the Great Lakes. The dredging backlog in the Great Lakes alone is estimated to cost about \$200 million to address.

The Harbor Maintenance Tax and Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund were created in 1986 to fund operations and maintenance of federal ports and harbors. The tax is levied against the value of imports and domestic cargo arriving at U.S. ports that have federally maintained harbors and channels. The Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund currently has a balance of more than \$5.7 billion. But the fund is not being fully used to address critical maintenance needs of harbors and ports around the country.

Similar problems once faced the Highway Trust Fund and the Airports and Airways Trust Fund, but Congress enacted similar legislation to correct them.

The bill is S. 412 and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Environment and

Public Works.

Read Levin's [floor statement on the bill introduction here](#).