



June 2, 2020

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

On behalf of America's 3069 counties, the National Association of Counties (NACo) thanks you and the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) for passing S. 3591, the *America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020* (AWIA) and S. 3590, the *Drinking Water Infrastructure Act of 2020*. As major owners, users and regulators of water resources and systems with the responsibility for funding 95 percent of all local public water infrastructure needs, counties and other local governments are profoundly impacted by the policies and funding authorized by these pieces of legislation.

As negotiations enter the final phase, counties urge you to include a full unlock of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) to address the projected \$98 billion backlog of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) authorized water projects. We appreciate the recent action by Congress in the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act* (P.L. 116-136) to partially unlock the fund by allowing the Corps to utilize its annual receipts to deliver badly needed water resource projects and ask that you build on this progress in AWIA 2020 by unlocking the HMTF entirely. This will ensure HMTF revenues are used in full for their intended purposes – harbor maintenance projects.

County- owned or operated ports often act as economic generators for an entire region. For instance, in 2016, the county-operated Port Miami in Miami-Dade County, Fla. generated \$41.4 billion in economic activity for the state of Florida. Modernizing these harbors and ports will further enhance trade and ensure the economic competitiveness of not only local and regional communities, but also that of our state and federal partners. At the same time, other communities may be entirely reliant upon a port and the economic potential for maritime industries, such as commercial fishing, and employment opportunities that it provides. To ensure these valuable economic assets remain in working order, counties support the full expenditure of HMTF collections to be used exclusively on dredging and harbor maintenance activities. We also encourage Congress to provide equity for deep draft ports, who make substantial contributions to the HMTF but do not have significant dredging needs, by allowing them to utilize trust fund dollars for limited port-related uses other than dredging.

Counties appreciate your bipartisan work to deliver new and timely water reauthorizations. We stand ready to work with our federal partners to strengthen the intergovernmental partnership and ensure

that the safety and modernization of our nation's water infrastructure systems remains a top national priority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matthew D. Chase". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop over the "M" and "C".

Matthew D. Chase
CEO/Executive Director
National Association of Counties