



GARY P. LaGRANGE, PPM
President and Chief
Executive Officer

June 22, 2012

Honorable Cedric Richmond
415 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Richmond,

The Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans enthusiastically supports your legislation to modify the project depth of the Mississippi River Ship Channel from the Gulf of Mexico to Baton Rouge.

As you know, the five international ports on the Lower Mississippi River make up the largest port complex in the world. More than 20 percent of U.S. waterborne commerce uses the Lower Mississippi river. Each year, more than 60 percent of the Nation's grain and soybean exports are shipped overseas through the channel and more than a quarter of all bulk ships entering the United States use the Lower Mississippi River – resulting in between \$85 billion to \$104 billion in annual foreign trade.

Deepening the project depth of this channel from its current 45-foot draft to your proposed 50-foot draft would greatly increase the competitiveness of our Nation's farmers, producers, coal miners and manufacturers who depend on the channel to export their goods overseas. Each foot of draft on oceangoing ships translates into \$600,000 to \$1 million for shippers, growers and producers who compete daily in the global marketplace. A 50-foot draft would greatly increase the competitiveness of these industries and would accommodate the larger vessels expected to traverse the expanded Panama Canal beginning in 2014.

Simply, the Mississippi River is vital to our Nation's competitiveness and a 50-foot channel would aid tremendously in increasing efficiencies and reducing shipping costs for our export trade. The Mississippi River and its tributaries feed a 14,500-mile inland waterway system that touches 33 states and three Canadian provinces and serves as a maritime superhighway for international and domestic trade.

The Board stands ready to assist with your efforts to deepen this vital channel.

Best,



Gary LaGrange, PPM
President and CEO

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE PORT OF NEW ORLEANS