

**Statement**  
**The Honorable Kevin Brady (R-TX)**  
**Committee on Ways & Means Joint Hearing**  
**of the**  
**Oversight and Select Revenues Subcommittees**  
**February 1, 2012**

Chairman Boustany, Chairman Tiberi and my fellow Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to share some thoughts regarding the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund. Mr. Boustany, I particularly appreciate your leadership on this critical issue. Back home, our districts not only share a border across the Sabine River but also are united by some of our country's most critical port infrastructure and waterways, including America's Energy Gateway: The Sabine-Neches Waterway. I am a cosponsor and strong advocate of your legislation, Realize America's Maritime Promise (RAMP) Act, to address issues with the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund.

I also thank you for joining me in our long fight to deepen the Sabine-Neches Waterway in preparation for the improvements to the Panama Canal that will bring much deeper and more efficient Post-Panamax Tanker Vessels to the Sabine-Neches Waterway and to many other ship channels in Texas, Louisiana and the rest of the Gulf Coast and even many improving ship channels along the East Coast. The Sabine-Neches Waterway has completed its feasibility study phase and successfully secured a favorable report from the Chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

I recently had an opportunity to visit with the directors of our Texas ports. They had one simple but critical request: secure the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund for the future, and more importantly, fully use the trust fund revenues for their intended purpose of maintaining the most competitive, efficient and productive waterways in the world.

The Sabine-Neches Waterway is an example of the issue we are discussing today. The Sabine-Neches Waterway has not been improved in over fifty years, and it has been fighting for its deepening authorization for over a decade. And, when this Congress approves these vital improvements—and I hope that is much sooner rather than later—the users of the waterway should not have to worry about whether the investment—their investment—is going to be maintained. The RAMP Act legislation will help ensure that the revenues in the Harbor Maintenance fund

will be used—as they should be—for its maintenance needs today and for many years to come after Congress authorizes the deepening of this critical waterway.

International trade is a critical component of our current economic recovery. The progress we made last fall in opening new markets for American products specifically with the new sales agreements with Colombia, Panama and Korea are bright spots for economic growth. The expansion of the Panama Canal presents another tremendous opportunity for American businesses, but only if we have the infrastructure to support the increased ship size and tonnage that will result. Ports, not only along the Gulf Coast but along our eastern seaboard, are getting ready and they want this business. But today, only one port can accept the Post-Panamax ships. How we address this critical situation is important not only for areas like the Sabine Neches Waterway I mentioned earlier, but for our nation's competitiveness.

Our Texas ports proudly rank number two in the United States in handling foreign and domestic cargo representing nearly one-quarter of our nation's port tonnage. Texas ports also account for one million jobs and \$48 billion in personal income for Texans.

Those numbers should continue to grow absent one fact. As a nation, we are not effectively maintaining the capacity of our waterways. Other countries around the world are vying for this commerce and they are making the necessary waterway infrastructure investments to seize this growth. We can do the same. However, the revenues from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund are not being reinvested into our nation's waterways at a sufficient rate. For too long, the trust fund's revenues have accumulated while our waterways suffer.

Today, the trust fund has a surplus of over \$6 billion yet the nation's backlog of harbor maintenance needs continues to grow. Our waterway users deserve much better. They have made the investment, at an annual rate of about \$1.5 billion, but are getting much less in return.

We must use the harbor maintenance fees for harbor maintenance projects. That's the remedy offered by the RAMP Act, and why I hope my committee colleagues will support this legislation and create more jobs for our fellow Americans. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.