

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 8, 2021

The Honorable Russell T. Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

The Honorable Rickey “R.D.” James
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20314

Dear Director Vought and Assistant Secretary James:

As representatives from the Commonwealth of Virginia, home to the Port of Virginia – one of the largest and busiest ports on the eastern seaboard – we write today concerning the development of the Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) Fiscal Year 2021 Work Plan and the importance of the Norfolk Harbor and Channels Project.

The Port of Virginia is one of the Commonwealth’s most powerful economic engines. On an annual basis, the Port is responsible for more than 400,000 jobs and \$92 billion in spending across our Commonwealth and generates more than seven and a half percent of our Gross State Product, but the Port’s true reach extends throughout the Mid-Atlantic and into the Midwest and Ohio Valley. The Port maintains a balanced portfolio of container and bulk trade with U.S. exports comprising more than half of its container movements – serving a robust rail market to and from the American farmers and manufacturers throughout the Midwest and Ohio Valley.

The deepening and widening of Norfolk Harbor will ensure the continued safe and timely passage of larger commercial and military vessels through Norfolk Harbor. The rapid growth of larger vessels entering maritime trade makes it essential that this project proceed as quickly as possible. The public and private non-federal interests have invested billions of dollars on land-side infrastructure and are prepared to provide their cost share to complete this crucial navigation project in a timely manner.

Thanks to the cooperation between the Port of Virginia, the Norfolk District, and the rest of the Army Corps staff, construction on the first constructible element, deepening Thimble Shoal Channel – West, began in December 2019, 18 months ahead of schedule. Dredging of Thimble Shoal Channel – West is approximately 30 percent complete and on target to reach 80 percent completion by July 2021. Work packages for the next two constructible elements, Thimble Shoal Channel – East deepening and widening and Inner Harbor deepening, are ready for advertisement at that point. In order to maintain this schedule, the project requires a New Start designation and \$78.3 million in Federal construction funding in the Army Corps’ FY21 Work Plan to fully fund the Inner Harbor contract and match the non-Federal cost share already

obligated on the Thimble Shoal West contract. A minimum of \$40 million would allow the segment to be bid in whole with matching non-Federal funds, but almost no non-Federal share would remain for future contracts risking the overall project completion timeline.

The Port of Virginia is a commercial and economic engine for the United States and continues to play an integral role in American foreign and domestic commerce and trade. Federal investment into this project will allow the Port to remain a prominent economic hub for the nation and a key player in domestic and international trade by generating more than \$78 million in annual national economic development benefits. The importance of this project and its value to the nation is apparent, as Norfolk Harbor is the only navigation construction project with language supporting a New Start designation in the House of Representatives and Senate’s respective Energy and Water Development Appropriations Committee reports.

Thank you for your consideration. If we can be of any assistance to you going forward, please contact us.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mark R. Warner

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/ Robert C. “Bobby” Scott

Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
Member of Congress

/s/ Robert J. Wittman

Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress

/s/ Gerald E. Connolly

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

/s/ H. Morgan Griffith

H. Morgan Griffith
Member of Congress

/s/ Donald S. Beyer Jr.

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ A. Donald McEachin

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

/s/ Abigail D. Spanberger

Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress

/s/ Elaine G. Luria

Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress

/s/ Ben Cline

Ben Cline
Member of Congress

/s/ Jennifer Wexton

Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress

/s/ Bob Good

Bob Good
Member of Congress