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“Investing in Maritime Jobs: The Port of Wilmington, 45’, and Economic Development.”



Herman V. Brandt Photography

Wilmington, DE - On March 30, 2012, 135 members of Delaware’s maritime community came out to the DuPont Country Club to listen to U.S. Senator Chris Coons address critical economic development issues for the Port of Wilmington.

Senator Coons addressed the Port of Wilmington Maritime Society regarding the need to invest in maritime jobs. “The numbers on the Port are incredible,” stated Coons. In CY 2011, the Port of Wilmington, Delaware handled 5,084,478 tons of cargo, a 26% uptick year over year, and achieved the highest general cargo tonnage throughput since the 1995 acquisition of the Port by the State of Delaware.

Senator Coons continued, “At a time when the economy is still slowly recovering, at a time when we have a President and a Governor who say that import and export trade and connectiveness to the global economy matter more than anything else, we have in Delaware the Port of Wilmington, a port that works, a port that is growing and a port that I think has a bright and solid future.”

“At the end of the day, when we have to make tough decisions, it is better to be all in and fight hard for things that will produce sustainable, high-quality jobs for the working men and women in Wilmington, Delaware, and sustainable high-quality prospects for economic growth for our region. There are so many other fights we can be having than this one, in my view, that it is time to end it and move on and invest in dredging and expansion. In particular with opportunities coming our way with the Panama Canal expansion. We don’t do enough telling the rest of our state, our region and our national government how strong the numbers are for investment in the maritime industry. They almost seem unbelievable.”

The address followed a bipartisan amendment filed by Senators Coons, Bob Casey (D-Pa.), and Pat Toomey (R-Pa.), cosponsored by U.S. Senator Tom Carper (D-Del.), to the FY 2012 appropriations bill that sought to increase federal funding for ongoing navigation projects. The final FY 2012 appropriations bill included \$74 million for the account, which was used to fund the Delaware River deepening as well as other projects across the country.

Furthermore, Senators Carper, Coons, and Casey sent letters to the Assistant Secretary of the Army-Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy and the Office of Management and Budget Director Jacob Lew in December asking for additional funding for the deepening project. On February 12, news was received that President Obama’s FY 2013 budget includes \$31 million for continued deepening of the Delaware River navigation channel.

This is in addition to the \$16.864 million dollars allocated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deepen the next 15-mile stretch of the Delaware between Penn’s Landing and Essington starting in early August. As the only ports

on the East coast restricted to a 40 foot shipping channel, our region is at an unfair disadvantage. Deepening the channel will help the ports here remain competitive in vying for cargoes and bigger ships to come from Asia when the Panama Canal is expanded in 2014 and allow our region to create and retain much-needed jobs.

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The Port of Wilmington Maritime (POWMS) is a non-profit apolitical membership organization dedicated to promoting economic development through the support of businesses in and around the Port. It acts as a liaison between port management and affiliated businesses, as well as local government and federal organizations. Membership is drawn from both the maritime and business communities.

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