



Leading Businesses. Leading Communities.™

September 22, 2009

The Honorable Jack A. Markell
Governor
820 N. French Street, 12th Floor
Wilmington, DE 19801

RE: Proposed Dredging of the Delaware River Channel

Dear Governor Markell:

I am writing on behalf of the 1,700 members and Board of Directors of the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce in order to express the Chamber's support for the deepening of the Delaware River main navigational shipping channel to 45 feet. We consider this infrastructure project essential to the health of our local and regional economies and integral to the future success of the Port of Wilmington.

In the best of economic times, the Port of Wilmington is a critically important asset. The Port supports 4,350 direct, indirect and induced jobs, injects nearly \$500 million a year into the local economy and provides nearly \$28 million in state and local tax revenue. We would support the deepening of the channel even if we were in the midst of a boom.

Clearly we are not in the midst of a boom. During the course of the past year, the private sector unemployment rate in Delaware has nearly doubled. Our State has lost two auto plants. A sizable percentage (48% by some estimates) of the skilled tradesmen in Delaware are out of work. A little more than a week ago, the Delaware City Refinery announced that it would be shedding 250 jobs. The financial services industry continues to contract in our State. Everywhere you turn, signs of deepening economic turmoil for our State abound. Now more than ever, action is necessary to preserve and grow our State's economy by protecting one of our last dependable engines for well-paying union and nonunion jobs in Delaware.

The deepening of the channel will allow the Port to compete for larger container vessels from the Far East which are diverting from the West to East Coast ports through the Suez and Panama Canals. Our port must compete with facilities from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Savannah Georgia for this shipping. If we do not deepen the channel, we stand to lose substantial amounts of shipping to ports with deeper channels, a failure which will impact Wilmington and other ports further up river which are also important to our regional economy.

The Chamber supports the responsible stewardship of our natural resources. However, we would point out that numerous scientific studies conducted over the years and reviewed by government agencies support the conclusion that materials dredged from the channel will be environmentally benign.

We urge the State of Delaware to grant the permit necessary for this project to proceed as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Respectfully,


Mark A. Kleinschmidt, President

cc: The Honorable Alan Levin, DEDO Director
The Honorable Collin O'Mara, Secretary, DNREC