

The Maritime Goods Movement Act for the 21st Century

Senator Patty Murray and Senator Maria Cantwell's legislation would strengthen American ports and enhance the competitiveness of the American economy.

The Problem:

The Harbor Maintenance Tax, a long-established tax on imports that funds the operation and maintenance of America's large and small ports, is not being fully collected. Because of that, American ports, which drive job creation and anchor our export economy, can't make the infrastructure investments they need to support American businesses.

Currently, shippers can avoid paying the tax – which important ports nationwide rely on – by shipping goods through other ports in Canada and Mexico and then transporting those goods into our country via truck and rail.

This reduces the funds available to keep American ports in operating condition.

Additionally, on average, only half of the diminished tax revenue that is collected is actually spent each year, even though our ports are in desperate need of additional maintenance funding.

The Solution:

The Maritime Goods Movement Act for the 21st Century

Senator Murray and Senator Cantwell are addressing this threat to America's maritime economy with legislation to create a more equitable playing field for American ports. The Maritime Goods Movement Act for the 21st Century would:

- Repeal the Harbor Maintenance Tax and replace it with the Maritime Goods Movement User Fee, the proceeds of which would be fully available to Congress to provide for port operation and maintenance. This would nearly double the amount of funds available for American ports, which will help our economy thrive.
- Ensure that shippers cannot avoid the Maritime Goods Movement User Fee by using ports in Canada and Mexico.
- Set aside a portion of the user fee for critical low-use ports that are at a competitive disadvantage for federal funding.
- Create a competitive grant program using a percentage of the collected user fees to improve the U.S. intermodal transportation system so goods can more efficiently reach their intended destinations.

Support:

The Maritime Goods Movement Act has already received strong support from large and small ports including the Ports of Seattle, Tacoma, Grays Harbor, Vancouver, Everett, Longview, and Portland. Key stakeholders like the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association and the Washington Council on International Trade have also endorsed the legislation.