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Alliance of the Ports of Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States



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July 31, 2020

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”

Christopher J. Connor,
President & CEO,
AAPA

Senate Version of MTS Emergency Relief Act Authorizes Critical Funding for America’s Ports

AAPA encourages expeditious passage to aid in port relief efforts



*AAPA President & CEO
Christopher J. Connor*

U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (R-OR) and Senate Commerce Committee Security Subcommittee Chairman Dan Sullivan (R-AK) on July 30 introduced S. 4395, the *Maritime Transportation System Emergency Relief Act* (MTSERA) to help America’s ports weather the coronavirus pandemic and future disasters.

This bill is a companion to H.R. 7515, also titled the

Maritime Transportation System Emergency Relief Act, which was introduced in the House on July 9 by House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Peter A. DeFazio (D-OR) and Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee Chairman Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY).

The bipartisan MTSERA seeks to establish a first-of-its-kind comprehensive maritime emergency relief authority to provide critical financial assistance in the form of grants so the U.S. Maritime Transportation System remains functional and reliable in the event of a national

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emergency or natural disaster. The grants, provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration (MARAD), could pay for ports’ operating and overhead costs involved with emergency response operations, cleaning, sanitizing, janitorial services, staffing, workforce retention, paid leave, procurement of protective health equipment, debt service payments, and infrastructure repair projects, among other essential needs.

In the event of natural disasters, the emergency relief authority could also be invoked to allow MARAD to award grants to help repair or replace damaged equipment, facilities and other port infrastructure.

[American Association of Port Authorities](#) (AAPA) President and CEO [Christopher J. Connor](#) said he is pleased to see the MTSERA companion bill introduced so the proposed legislation can quickly move toward Congressional approval and being signed in to law by President Donald J. Trump.

“COVID-19 relief is critical for the port and maritime industry in response to challenges faced as a result of the pandemic,” said Mr. Connor. “This proposal would establish a permanent vehicle to provide relief to U.S. ports and the maritime industry following a natural disaster, whether that be a hurricane, flood, earthquake, tsunami, or future pandemic. It’s become crystal clear that such a program is necessary to help our nation’s ports to manage the effects of this pandemic and future disasters as they impact ports’ ability to function efficiently and maintain a state of readiness.”

Mr. Connor went on to say, “AAPA applauds the work of Senators Merkley and Sullivan to craft a bill and push for immediate relief that aligns well with the urgent emergency needs of America’s maritime ports so they can continue to focus on the task at hand ... ensuring delivery of goods to the front lines as our nation continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic.”

About AAPA

Founded in 1912 and recognized as the unified voice of seaports in the Americas, AAPA today represents 130 of the leading seaport authorities in the United States, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean and more than 200 industry solution providers and associate members, firms and individuals with an interest in seaports. Cargo activities at U.S. seaports support nearly 31 million American jobs and account for 26 percent of the U.S. economy, generating nearly \$5.4 trillion in total economic activity and more than \$378 billion in federal, state and local taxes in 2018. To meet the growing demand for trade, AAPA and its members are committed to keeping seaports navigable, secure and sustainable. For more information, visit www.aapa-ports.org. On Twitter: http://twitter.com/AAPA_Seaports

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