

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 28, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL
IMMEDIATE ATTENTION REQUESTED

The Honorable RD James
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Room 3E446
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Lieutenant General Todd Semonite
Chief of Engineers
Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

RE: Inclusion of the Houston Ship Channel Widening in FY2020 USACE Work Plan

Dear Secretary James and General Semonite:

As representatives from a state that relies heavily on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to provide safe, navigable harbors and waterways, we understand and appreciate the work undertaken by the USACE in a time of constrained budgets. However, as you develop the Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Work Plan, we see an opportunity for the USACE to use a minimal amount of discretionary General Investigation funds provided by Congress to assist in accelerating the Houston Ship Channel – Expansion Channel Improvement Project (HSC-ECIP).

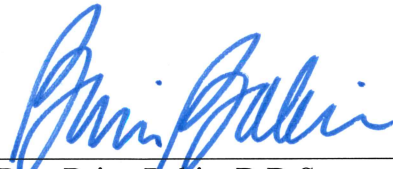
As you know, the Galveston District (SWG) recently completed the HSC-ECIP feasibility study, which is currently undergoing final review before the issuance of a final Report of the Chief of Engineers in May 2020. Under current USACE guidelines and policies, the USACE can initiate pre-engineering and design (PED) activities after the Chief's Report is transmitted to Congress and prior to authorization [33 U.S.C 2287]. To accelerate the project delivery schedule, the non-Federal sponsor – Port of Houston, has begun work on its PED activities, but requires the USACE to make an investment decision on its own activities and be ready to begin PED once the Chief's Report is transmitted to Congress [EC 1130-2-220].

The Houston Ship Channel (HSC) is the busiest deep-draft waterway in the nation, with as many annual ship calls as the next three largest U.S. ports combined (LA, Long Beach, and NY/NJ), and has more than 200,000 barge movements. The HSC supports 200-plus industrial facilities that comprise the nation's number one export region, the leading port for foreign commerce, and the top U.S. energy port. The Port of Houston is the epicenter of our National Energy Security, where 27% of U.S. gasoline and 60% of aviation fuel is produced, and is home to the largest petrochemical manufacturing complex in the nation. This activity sustains nearly 3 million U.S. jobs, generates more than \$802 billion in economic impact, and provides \$35 billion in tax revenue each year.

However, the lifting of the oil and gas export ban in 2015 has domestic oil and gas production in full swing. Increases in global energy consumption and the foreign market demand for cleaner, more efficient fossil fuels resulted in significant energy and petrochemical manufacturing investments that have come online in 2020, which means more jobs and increased exports of U.S. energy. To meet demand in the global marketplace, enable continued growth, and reduce our trade deficit, it is imperative that the HSC-ECIP be expeditiously widened and improved to provide safe, efficient transit for the ever-increasing number of inbound and outbound vessels.

Providing the adequate requisite funding amount for the HSC-ECIP is an opportunity to invest in a national transportation asset that would allow U.S. companies and the Port of Houston to significantly increase export capacity and help solidify the U.S. as a world energy leader. As the representative delegation, we are concerted in our request and thank you for your personal attention to this matter of importance to the people and businesses of the greater Houston region, the State of Texas, and the nation.

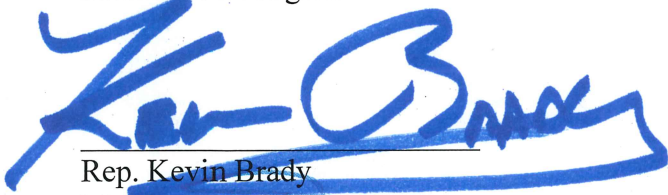
Respectfully,



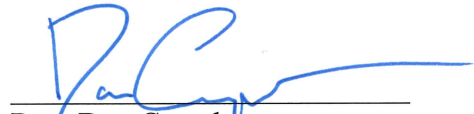
Rep. Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Rep. Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



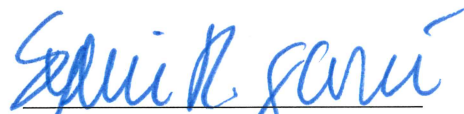
Rep. Kevin Brady
Member of Congress



Rep. Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress



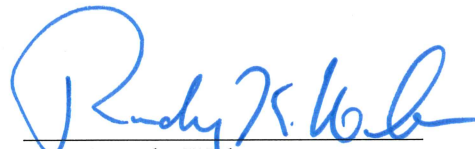
Rep. Al Green
Member of Congress



Rep. Sylvia Garcia
Member of Congress



Rep. Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress



Rep. Randy Weber
Member of Congress