

Congressman Praises Waterways Capital Development Plan

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Washington, D.C.—Rep. Harold Rogers (R-Ky.) promised the barge and towing industry February 16 that he would “work hard to ensure that our waterways remain an affordable, viable option for your industry.”

Speaking at the Leadership Service Award Reception and Dinner sponsored by Waterways Council Inc. (WCI), Rogers, winner of this year’s award, defended the House of Representatives’ recently approved budget bill with targeted spending cuts “five times larger than any other discretionary cut package ever considered by the House.”



“I won’t sugar-coat it,” the 15-term congressman said. “These decisions were tough, and they represent a commitment to shared sacrifice. We’re all going to have to do more with less, just as families around the country are tightening their belts and stretching their budget.”

Rogers said the bill (H.R. 1), which takes aim at \$100 billion in government spending cuts, “roots out underperform-

ing and wasteful programs while maintaining our commitment to our troops overseas and our veterans here at home. We’ve been indiscriminate, not in our cutting, but in our spending these past few years; that ends here.”

Rogers said that with instability in the oil market and gas prices, the nation’s waterways “are becoming increasingly important for commerce. You all transported nearly 1 billion tons of commodities in 2008—60 percent of our grain, a quarter of our petroleum and 20 percent of the coal we use to fire our power plants.”

The lawmaker applauded the industry for coming forward with a proposal to increase the diesel fuel tax to help modernize the waterways’ aging infrastructure.

“I can’t remember the last time someone came to me and said, ‘Please raise my taxes,’” he said. “But that’s exactly what you’re doing, and that is an embodiment of the spirit of shared sacrifice I mentioned earlier.”

In return for higher fuel taxes, he said, “you’re asking for a commitment from the federal government to deliver projects on time and on budget, and to provide a stable funding mechanism for future capital investment.”

Echoing Rogers’ call for more attention to the waterways’ infrastructure was WCI Chairman Rick Calhoun, who likened the waterways infrastructure to the bridges, roads and runways that also need

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attention. “Too often out of sight, out of mind, it (the waterways infrastructure) continues to show its age, and is in need of urgent recapitalization.”

“And so our inland waterways modernization challenge ahead is the need to create and implement an improved program for the future. The current project funding and delivery system is too inefficient, resulting in much wasted time and money.”

In concluding remarks, Calhoun reminded the administration that the Army Corps of Engineers and the Inland Waterways Users Board worked for nearly 18 months to develop a set of recommendations intended to solve the problem of the country’s aging and inefficient waterways infrastructure.

The recommendations, known as the Inland Waterways Capital Development Plan that includes the proposed fuel tax increase, encompass a long-term strategy “that will help improve the project-delivery system and help ensure that future projects are completed on time and



—Photo courtesy of Waterways Council Inc.
Rep. Hal Rogers (R-Ky.), chairman of the House Appropriations Committee (center), was presented Waterways Council Inc.’s 10th Annual Leadership Service Award from Cornel Martin, WCI president and chief executive officer (left) and Rick Calhoun, WCI chairman (right).