

[Murray, Cantwell Unveil Legislation to Support American Ports](#)

Local News

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SEATTLE, Wash. - On Thursday, August 15th, U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, Port of Seattle CEO Tay Yoshitani, and Port of Tacoma CEO John Wolfe held a press conference at the Bell Harbor Conference Center rooftop deck to announce new legislation that will significantly strengthen American ports, including many in the Pacific Northwest. 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. 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. Specifically, 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 double the amount of funds available for American ports, which will help our export 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 low-use, remote, and subsistence harbors 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 imported goods and goods for export can more efficiently reach their intended destinations. Pay for expanded infrastructure investments by closing loopholes that allow the largest oil and gas companies in America to receive billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies every year, even though they enjoy profits in excess of \$100 billion annually.

*"Senator Cantwell and I have worked with small and large ports here in Washington state, the business community, and labor leaders to write the Maritime Goods Movement Act - which will make desperately needed improvements to the laws that impact ports of all sizes and business large and small - exporters and importers," Senator Murray said. "This legislation will change the Harbor Maintenance Tax to give shippers new incentives to move their goods through American ports - particularly those in the Pacific Northwest." "I will continue to work with Senator Murray and my west coast colleagues on a solution that gives our ports relief and keeps us competitive," said Senator Cantwell. "We know that Washington state goods and products are in high demand all over the world -- from apples to airplanes to software. Fixing the H-M-T is about giving businesses and workers in our trade economy tools to succeed in a global marketplace. Because we know that if the playing field is level, Washington's state ports and products will win out." More about the Maritime Goods Movement Act for the 21st Century [HERE](#). **Senator Murray's remarks, as prepared:** "Thank you all for being here today. I'd like to start by thanking my colleague and partner in the U.S. Senate, Maria Cantwell, Tay Yoshitani from the Port of Seattle, John Wolfe from the Port of Tacoma, Dan McKisson from the ILWU, Port of Seattle commissioners Stephanie Bowman, John Creighton, and Courtney Gregoire, Port of Tacoma commissioners Don Mayer and Connie Bacon, Grays Harbor Port Commissioner Jack Thompson and Snohomish County*

Councilman Dave Gossett. "Thank you all for your support on this important issue. "And I'm thrilled to be here at one of our city's beautiful piers to talk about the importance of our ports and the trade economy that's supported our region for generations. "As all of you know, Washington is the most trade-dependent state in our country...in fact, one in three jobs in Washington state is tied to international trade. "And every day, millions of dollars in goods move through our state's ports: bringing in products from every corner of the globe and shipping out goods manufactured or grown here in the Pacific Northwest. "But we're here today because some of the laws we have in place – specifically the Harbor Maintenance Tax – are actually hurting our ports and holding our economy back. "Currently – the Harbor Maintenance Tax is diverting US-bound sea cargo, which should enter our country through the Port of Seattle, the Port of Tacoma, or other ports along our shores... "Instead, shippers have decided it's more cost-efficient to send those US-bound goods to Canada and Mexico first – only to ship them to the United States by truck or rail. "That means fewer cargo containers coming into our ports. It means less work for longshoremen and pilots. And it means we can't make investments in infrastructure that our ports need to be state-of-the-art and competitive. "If that's not a perfect example of an outdated law, I don't know what is. "So that's why Senator Cantwell and I have worked with small and large ports here in Washington state, the business community, and labor leaders to write the Maritime Goods Movement Act – which will make desperately needed improvements to the laws that impact ports of all sizes and business large and small – exporters and importers. "This legislation will change the Harbor Maintenance Tax to give shippers new incentives to move their goods through American ports – particularly those in the Pacific Northwest. "And it will double the amount of funds we can use to re-invest in our ports each year to keep them competitive in the global marketplace...including remote and low-use ports that need our support. "We'll be introducing this new legislation when the Senate returns to session in September and we couldn't have done it without the support of all the people here today. "I also want to thank our colleague in the House of Representatives, Jim McDermott, who's worked closely with us on this issue – we'll need his support to get this passed through the House. "So, thank you again for being here today, and now, I'd like to introduce my partner in the United States Senate, Maria Cantwell." **Senator Cantwell's remarks, as prepared:** "Thank you. "I'd like to thank Senator Murray for that introduction. "I've been proud to work with Senator Murray to further the growth of Washington's ports. Looking across the water here gives you a clear picture of why the ports of Seattle and Tacoma support 200,000 jobs. "You can literally watch Washington's trade economy in motion at the Port of Seattle – or the Port of Tacoma. "When it comes to Washington state's economy, ports are us. More than 1 in 3 Washington jobs are tied to trade. That's why Senator Murray and I have worked to invest in Washington ports and the millions of jobs that depend on them. "And we've made some significant progress in investing in our port infrastructure. "One year ago – here at the Port of Seattle – I joined Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood to announce a new national initiative for smarter freight planning. "We are now on our way to developing America's first comprehensive freight strategic plan. And that's good news for ports in Washington state. "But even with this progress, Washington state ports face major challenges. "The Asia-Pacific market is growing. And Canada and Mexico are making major investments to capture more of that market. "Today, we're here to announce a step forward to make sure American ports can compete on a level playing field. "The time to fix our Harbor Maintenance Tax (H-M-T) is now. "Currently the H-M-T makes it harder for our ports to compete with Prince Rupert to the North – or the Port of Lazaro Cardenas to the South. "The threat is real. The Federal Maritime Commission found that up to 27 percent of container

volume moving through West Coast ports is at risk of diverting to Prince Rupert. “Here in the Puget Sound, that cargo diversion threatens the employment of about 10,000 American workers. “In fact, diversion of 10,000 containers from our ports in the Puget Sound could:• Cost businesses \$1.3 billion• Reduce income for workers by \$833 million• Cut local purchases by \$192 million• And slash state and local taxes by \$75 million “That’s why Senator Murray and I are introducing this bill to fix our broken system. The inequality for our ports needs to end. “I recently sent a letter to the chairman of the Finance Committee and stated that H-M-T reform must be included in any tax reform bill. “I will continue to work with Senator Murray and my west coast colleagues on any solution that gives our ports relief and keeps us competitive. “We know that Washington state goods and products are in high demand all over the world -- from apples to airplanes to software. “Fixing the H-M-T is about giving businesses and workers in our trade economy tools to succeed in a global marketplace. “Because we know that if the playing field is level, Washington’s state ports and products will win out. “West Coast deep-water ports like Seattle and Tacoma don’t need the same maintenance as shallow-water ports. “So while Seattle and Tacoma generate 7 percent of the funds for the H-M-T, they only receive a penny for every dollar collected. “Shippers are also moving goods through fast-growing ports in Mexico and Canada to avoid paying the H-M-T. “Our legislation would fix the H-M-T with a user fee that would apply to all points of entry for U.S.-bound cargo. “This would level the playing field for our ports and protect our jobs here in Washington. “Trade affects all corners of our economy. And Washington’s ports are the heart of our trade economy. “We’re ready to hit the ground running with our bill when we get back to DC in September. “Because when it comes to shipping goods, Washington ports and Washington workers get the job done. And when we compete on a level playing field, we won’t lose. “Thank you all for coming today.”