

**RESOLUTION 4-H.F.No. 208**

*A resolution urging authorization of funding for improvement and rehabilitation of waterways.*

WHEREAS, waterway transportation is the most efficient means of transporting bulk commodities, transports more tons per gallon of fuel than either rail or truck while causing fewer accidents, less noise pollution, and fewer fatalities and traffic delays, provides a positive quality of life to the citizens of Minnesota, and is the most environmentally sound mode of transportation available; and

WHEREAS, because of its geographic location, Minnesota is disadvantaged by the distance commodities must travel when transported between Minnesota and domestic and international markets; and

WHEREAS, farm products, petroleum, coal, aggregates, fertilizer, salt, iron ore, metal products, and other bulk commodities needed by agriculture, industry, and the public sector are essential components of commerce and vital to the continued health of our national, local, and state economies; and

WHEREAS, the inland waterway lock and dam system provides recreational and eco-tourism opportunities to Minnesota, a reliable water source of 25 billion gallons per year for residential and industrial use in the Twin Cities area, and a cooling source for power plants which provide over 4,800 Minnesota jobs; and

WHEREAS, our transportation infrastructure enables agricultural products and other exported commodities to compete successfully in international markets and leads toward a favorable balance of trade for our national economy; and

WHEREAS, our waterway transportation infrastructure shares the public waters with the natural environment; and

WHEREAS, the natural environment provides public benefits such as recreation, tourism, domestic and industrial water supply, and scientific and educational opportunities which are also important elements to Minnesota's economy; and

WHEREAS, the Upper Mississippi River is a natural resource of statewide, regional, national, and international importance due to its status as one of the largest floodplain areas in the world, its importance as a migratory corridor for 40 percent of all North American Waterfowl and the sanctuary it provides to more than 200 species of threatened, endangered, or rare plants and animals; and

WHEREAS, the Great Lakes Seaway serves Minnesota by moving its bulk products to domestic and foreign destinations, amounting to over 65 million tons annually, including 43 million tons of Minnesota iron ore to steel mills in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, although dredging and maintenance of the seaway system is financed by the users, financing of the new Sault Ste. Marie Lock (owned and operated by United States Army Corps of Engineers) will be shared by the federal government and the eight seaway states on a prorated tonnage basis, requiring an estimated \$18 million from the state to be paid over a 50-year period; and

WHEREAS, the inland waterway system moves 17 million tons of bulk commodities annually between Minnesota and the eastern seaboard and Gulf states, including approximately 10 million tons of agricultural products exported through gulf ports; and

WHEREAS, dredging and maintenance costs of the inland waterway are paid out of federal funds, and financing of capital improvements to the inland waterway system is 50 percent from federal funds and

50 percent from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund, funded by a 20 cent per gallon fuel tax paid by waterway shippers; and

WHEREAS, the river industry has been taxed on fuel since 1980, and since the Inland Waterways Trust Fund was instituted in 1986, the Upper Mississippi River basin has contributed 40 percent of the funds and received only 15 percent return for capital improvements, making the Upper Midwest a tax donor region to the Ohio River valley and others; and

WHEREAS, the Port Development Assistance Program is the vehicle to rehabilitate Minnesota's public ports on the Mississippi River and Lake Superior; and

WHEREAS, this program updates and improves the operation and efficiency of the ports to keep them viable and competitive; and

WHEREAS, the 1996, 1998, and 2000 Minnesota legislatures appropriated funds for this program, and the 2001 legislature will be requested to appropriate an additional \$3 million to this program; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnesota Legislature supports Minnesota's pro rata participation in financing new construction at the Sault Ste. Marie Lock.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature formally recognizes the Upper Mississippi River as a river of statewide significance for natural, navigational, and recreational benefits.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature recognizes the critical habitat restoration and rehabilitation needs on the Upper Mississippi River.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature recognizes the importance of inland waterway transportation to Minnesota agriculture and to the economy of the state, the region, and the nation and urges Congress to authorize funding to improve transportation efficiency and restore the ecological values of the Upper Mississippi River System.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature supports the continued funding of the Port Development Assistance Program in recognition of the essential and fundamental contribution the Great Lakes and inland waterway transportation systems make to Minnesota's economy and to sustainable environmental programs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State of the State of Minnesota is directed to prepare copies of this memorial and transmit them to the President and the Secretary of the United States Senate, the Speaker and the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, the chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, the chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and Minnesota's Senators and Representatives in Congress.

Presented to the governor May 14, 2001

Signed by the governor May 17, 2001, 10:28 a.m.