

benefit all communities. It encourages contributions to local food banks such as the Chester County Food Bank in Exton, by making permanent a food-inventory donation in our tax code.

H.R. 636—America's Small Business Tax Relief Act will give small businesses certainty to grow and plan for the future.

We can all agree on the fact that our tax code needs reformed and simplified.

If we move to put these reforms in place we can continue to work towards comprehensive tax reform that is simpler, flatter, fairer, with lower rates for everyone.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL FREIGHT NETWORK TRUST FUND ACT OF 2015

HON. JANICE HAHN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 12, 2015

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing the National Freight Network Trust Fund Act of 2015 along with my Co-Chair of the bipartisan Congressional PORTS Caucus TED POE. This legislation will provide a guaranteed dedicated funding source, at no additional expense to taxpayers, to serve our nations freight movement.

The Port of Los Angeles is in my backyard and when I came to Congress, I was surprised that there was a lack of focus on ports and freight transportation in general. One of the reasons I co-founded the PORTS Caucus is to educate Members about the importance of freight transportation to our nation's economy.

We are a consumer economy. Whether it is a "mom and pop" store on the corner or a large retailer like Target, we don't think twice when we go to these stores to purchase groceries, toys, or clothing. When we go to the store, we expect that milk and the Barbie dolls are on the shelf.

We also want to ensure that goods Made in America—including manufacturing and agriculture—are able to be shipped efficiently across our nation's highways and rail to our ports for export, which is crucial to our nation's continued economic success.

Ultimately, in MAP-21—our last surface transportation bill—we were successful in including provisions to start the conversation about developing a national freight transportation network.

The problem is that today there are not enough funds to keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent—let alone make the necessary investment to modernize and increase the efficiency of our freight network. That will not keep our economy global competitive as we continue progressing through the 21st Century.

For example, goods that leave the Port of Los Angeles take 48 hours to arrive in Chicago and takes 30 hours to travel across the city. This bottleneck is unacceptable and means higher costs for consumers, more congestion, more pollution, and less jobs. The bottom line is that we need to fund our nation's freight network.

If we fail to fund our ports, we will lose our competitive edge and add costs to our goods. A USDOT report, Freight Transportation: Improvements and the Economy, estimates the cost of carrying freight on the highway system

at between \$25 and \$200 an hour. Unexpected delays can increase the cost of transporting goods by 50 to 250 percent.

To keep our nation's freight network globally competitive, I am introducing the National Freight Network Trust Fund Act of 2015, which would create a dedicated source of funding for essential projects to improve and modernize our freight network at no new cost to the public.

This legislation would create a National Freight Network Trust Fund and deposit 5% of all import duties collected by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at Ports of Entry into the Fund to be spent only on freight transportation. Neither businesses nor taxpayers would incur any new cost because it uses a small percentage of funds our CBP officials already are collecting at the border as freight enters our nation.

Five percent of import duties amounts to roughly \$2 billion in the Trust Fund every year at our current rate of imports, a level that would help address the nation's infrastructure funding deficit and allow us to make essential investments in the freight network.

This legislation would create the National Freight Network Trust Fund as an off-budget trust fund to only serve the roads of the National Freight Network and those roads and rail that connect the Network to Ports of Entry.

The legislation would also direct the Secretary of Transportation to work in accordance with the National Freight Strategic Plan to identify improvements to the National Freight Network, on-dock rail, and roads and rail that connect the Network to Ports of Entry, which show the greatest need in providing for the movement of freight and goods across the United States. It would also provide grants at the Secretary's discretion to State, regional and local transportation authorities to make freight network improvements.

This bill will infuse billions back into the economy every year, help create good paying American jobs and keep our nation's ports strong and globally competitive.

This is a win for our ports and for our nation's economy. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

RECOGNIZING STELLA M. KOCH ON HER RETIREMENT FROM THE AUDUBON NATURALIST SOCIETY

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 12, 2015

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize and commend my good friend, Stella M. Koch, on the occasion of her retirement after a distinguished career with the Audubon Naturalist Society, where she led conservation and environmental education and protection efforts throughout Northern Virginia and the Commonwealth. Safeguarding our natural environment has been more than a profession for Stella, it's been her passion. She truly embodies the famous epithet of the late Connecticut Governor Ella Grasso, "bloom where you're planted."

Stella's environmental advocacy took root in the classroom, when she taught biology and was the science department chair at the Edmund Burke School in Washington, D.C., from

1977 to 1991. A fortuitous call to the Audubon Naturalist Society to inquire about working with its membership on Chesapeake Bay and land conservation issues ultimately led to her being hired by ANS to join its Virginia conservation staff, where she has spent the past 24 years. Through her professional duties and personal engagement in multiple community organizations, Stella has played a vital role in virtually every major environmental initiative in Northern Virginia for the past quarter century.

I was pleased to be among the first to recruit Stella into our effort more than 20 years ago, and she has been a wonderful partner ever since. At the time, I was president of the Fairfax Federation of Citizen's Associations and convinced Stella to become the Federation's Environmental Chair. She wasted no time, diving into weighty issues during her two-year tenure, including helping to prevent a planned roadway from splitting Huntley Meadows Park in southern Fairfax and blocking a private effort to bring public sewer service and new development to Mason Neck, an environmentally sensitive area along the Potomac most notable for its National Wildlife Refuge that was created to protect local bald eagles.

During this time she was instrumental in establishing the Virginia Environmental Network, and its successor the Virginia Conservation Network, which coordinated the activities of local and regional environmental groups across the Commonwealth. Through the Audubon Naturalist Society and her local civic engagement, Stella successfully pushed back on the proposed Disney theme park in Haymarket. Building on the public interest in the region's growth generated by that experience, the environmental community launched an effort that led to the creation of the Coalition for Smarter Growth to focus on educating people and community leaders about the importance and value in building more livable communities with mass transit connections and walkability.

Stella was first appointed to serve on the County's Environmental Quality Advisory Committee in 1996. She has since been reappointed by me and my successor as Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Sharon Bulova. Stella has served as chairman of the Committee for several years, and she also serves as one of the County's appointees to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. Under Stella's leadership, the Committee has become an influential voice, filing an annual report with the Board of Supervisors that serves as the blueprint for most local efforts to improve and protect our natural environment—addressing air quality; climate change; ecological resources; energy efficiency; hazardous materials; land use and transportation; noise, light, and visible pollution; solid waste; water resources; and wildlife. It has become a model nationwide.

Stella was instrumental in crafting Fairfax County's 20-year Environmental Agenda, the first such long-range vision ever adopted by the County, addressing all facets of the environment from improving air quality to preserving more of the county's green spaces to providing recreational options for residents. As a result of that plan, the County's Environmental Improvement Program won its first Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties, and we built on that success with the Cool Counties initiative, a national effort to help local governments reduce