

## **Navigation Safety**

### **Federal Investment in Navigation Safety Programs is Essential**

#### **National Ocean Service Navigation Safety Services**

It is a Federal responsibility to appropriate adequate resources for navigation safety, including U.S. Coast Guard and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) navigation aid programs. AAPA advocates for increased funding and strong Federal support for navigation services in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002, including:

- Mapping and Charting;
- Tides and Currents;
- the Physical Oceanographic and Real-Time Systems (PORTS); and
- the Coast Guard's navigation assistance services.

Providing adequate resources to maintain modern and accurate navigation aids must be a national priority, because these programs provide critical environmental protection and safety tools for the entire maritime industry and enhance U.S. competitiveness.

Safe navigation is one of the fundamental underpinnings of our national economy. Safety depends on accurate charts, real-time information and vessel traffic systems. The safety record of commercial shipping in this country is exemplary and maritime accidents are few and far between—a testament to the skills of the pilots and mariners who guide commercial ships into and out of ports. These pilots cannot do their jobs if the Federal government does not provide them with the necessary tools.

#### **Hydrographic Services Improvement Act**

The Hydrographic Services Improvement Act is legislation approved in 1998, which authorizes funding for NOAA navigation services. The Act was intended to provide the framework for catching up with the survey backlog and for modernizing navigation safety operations. Despite attempts to raise the bar and increase support for these essential programs, funding has lagged for new technologies and modernizing governmental programs mandated to support this mission. As a result, mariners and the marine environment are unnecessarily put at risk and NOAA cannot meet the growing needs of the maritime industry.

Since the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act expires at the end of 2001, it is essential that legislation be reauthorized during the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress to improve the conditions of these navigation safety tools.

#### **PORTS**

Physical Oceanographic Real-Time Systems (PORTS) allow mariners to better understand the conditions faced when entering a port and reduce the risk of oil spills and other environmental disasters. AAPA advocates Federal funding of the installation and ongoing operations of PORTS to help prevent ship groundings and collisions. Currently there are only five PORTS systems—the port authorities of New York and New Jersey, Tampa, Houston, San Francisco and Narragansett Bay. More than 30 other port areas across the United States have expressed

interest in installing this technology to prevent groundings and improve safety.

In FY 2001, PORTS received almost \$2.8 million within the Tides and Currents line item—an amount requested by the President for NOAA to maintain this critical navigation program. Though this was an improvement over FY 2000, it does not go far enough toward meeting the growing demands. PORTS should have received the total authorized \$11.5 million increase to the Tides and Currents line item in Fiscal Year 2001 to ensure that it becomes a nationally viable program.

### Updated Nautical Charts

Most maritime nations have built, or are in the process of building, electronic vector chart databases called ENC's. NOAA is responsible for providing mariners with official electronic vector charting data. Commercial software vendors then develop applications to display and manipulate the NOAA-produced data. The U.S. attempt to build vector charts has lagged due to a lack of funding. In fact, NOAA has been unable to aggressively implement vector electronic navigational charts in internationally approved formats. It will take \$10 million above current FY 2001 funding levels for NOAA to implement and maintain its suite of charts in the internationally compliant vector, electronic navigational chart format within five years.

### Coast Guard Programs

AAPA supports the continued maintenance of established Coast Guard programs such as the Ports and Waterways Safety Systems, and ice breaking where desired by the local port and shipping interests. AAPA urges that sufficient funds be appropriated by Congress. In addition, AAPA is generally supportive of the AIS (Automatic Identification System) approach to vessel traffic management as long as it is done on a port-by-port basis with input from the local stakeholder community. According to the 1999 Marine Transportation System Report, *An Assessment of the Marine Transportation System*, navigation safety depends on ensuring that traffic controls and navigation assistance can provide order and predictability into traffic flows while simultaneously maximizing system capacity for safe vessel movement. It is critical that Congress and the Administration recognize the important role the Coast Guard plays on the nation's waterways and provide adequate resources for their continued success.

### No New Taxes

AAPA opposes new taxes to fund aids to navigation. A diverse constituency, including the nation's defense agencies, emergency response agencies, flood control groups, fishermen, recreational and scientific interests, cruise vessels, ferries, and others, uses these navigation safety aids. Further, the maritime community is already paying millions of dollars in user fees and U.S. ports believe that aids to navigation should continue to be funded from existing revenues.

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