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June 29, 2018

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO, and its 17 international affiliated unions, we urge you to oppose S. 279, the Sand Acquisition, Nourishment and Development (SAND) Act, and any derivation thereof that may be attached to S. 2800, America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. We stand united against any amendment to WRDA that would remove the current environmental and economic standards that accompany the importation of beach fill from foreign sources.

This amendment is a direct assault on the Jones Act.

The Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO, its affiliates, and industry partners have long been opposed to this proposal because it will unfairly provide a marketplace advantage to foreign sources of this product. As you are aware, the United States has much higher labor and environmental standards than some of our country's global market competitors. We compromise our environment, health and quality standards and impact American jobs by tilting the playing field towards foreign sources. There is enough sand in Florida to supply nourishment and fill for the state's beaches for decades.

The aggregates industry provides more than 13,000 metric tons of sand and gravel from almost 150 Floridian quarries, directly employing thousands of people. The U.S. dredging industry builds its ships in the United States including in Panama City, Fla., and is America's leading builder of dredges. The ships are crewed with U.S. citizens and owned by U.S. companies. If the SAND Act or a similar amendment were to become law, sand would be sourced from overseas on foreign-flagged and foreign-built ships that are not staffed by the U.S. Merchant Marines. It is counterintuitive to invest in the nation's infrastructure while abandoning American products and jobs.

The Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO strongly supports WRDA. This is an essential bipartisan bill that will maintain and strengthen America's vital water infrastructure. As such, we urge a "no vote" on any amendment that would strike key economic, environmental and national security standards for beach fill importation.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Hart,  
President