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COALITION OF BUSINESS, LABOR UNIONS & LEGISLATORS URGES PORT-HIRING REFORM TO CREATE JOBS, PREVENT ECONOMIC DISASTER

(Elizabeth, NJ) – Citing a growing crisis that threatens the New York-New Jersey economy, a broad coalition of business groups, labor unions, and state legislative leaders today joined together in calling for the long-overdue and immediate filling of nearly 500 empty jobs at the region’s ports, and reforms to the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor to put the shipping industry and labor in joint control of future hiring.

New Jersey State AFL-CIO President Charles Wowkanech and New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce President Thomas Bracken are leading the coalition. The group also includes the New York Shipping Association, International Longshoremen’s Association, Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, Maritime Association of the Port of New York & New Jersey, Metropolitan Maintenance and Marine Contractors Association, NJ Motor Truck Association, NAIOP NJ, NJ Retail Merchants Association, Seafarers International Union, Teamsters, and the United Transportation Union.

“We are seeing our state’s largest economic engine essentially idled, and our port’s continued competitiveness being put at a disadvantage, because of the Waterfront Commission’s stranglehold on jobs,” said New Jersey State AFL-CIO President Charles Wowkanech. “It makes absolutely zero sense why nearly 500 badly needed jobs sit vacant when both business and labor are ready to fill them.”

“Job growth and a growing, healthy economy are vital components in our attack on New Jersey’s fiscal challenges,” said Thomas A. Bracken, president and CEO of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce. “A healthy and vibrant port addresses both of these needs. It adds good, permanent jobs to New Jersey’s workforce and a properly staffed port will run efficiently and assist many other industries such as trucking, manufacturing and retail.”

Under current laws, the Waterfront Commission controls all aspects of approving the hiring of workers who unload cargo at the ports of New York and New Jersey. There currently is a shortage of 500 jobs, which the Commission has not allowed to be filled, creating conditions where workers are forced into working consecutive multiple shifts. On April 1, an estimated 300 workers will retire through an early retirement incentive offered in the latest collecting bargaining agreement, further bringing the level of skilled workers to the breaking point.

The coalition said responsibility for ensuring proper staffing levels and dockworker hiring must be taken out of the hands of the Commission and given to terminal operators and representative

labor unions. As of last week the Commission had approved only one new mechanic to be hired at the ports since last October.

The labor shortage has already begun to impact economic activity, with shipping companies diverting cargo to other ports along the Eastern seaboard rather than cope with the delays in loading, unloading and delivering cargo. One trucking company whose business was centered on port activity has recently gone bankrupt.

In New Jersey alone, the ports support more than 251,000 jobs statewide, with a total economic footprint of more than \$40 billion.

“We are the only port in America that has to jump through such bureaucratic hoops just to fill one empty position, let alone the hundreds that remain,” said John Nardi, President of the New York Shipping Association. “We already are seeing cargo being rerouted to other ports due to the delays in hiring skilled labor. There is a better way. Like every business we need a right-sized work force of well-trained, diverse, and capable individuals as determined by the employer, not a quasigovernmental agency.”

“The Waterfront Commission has no business interfering with the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the ILA and New York Shipping,” said Harold Daggett, National President of the International Longshoremen’s Association. “The Commission’s action is costing the port revenue, denying workers, including returning U.S. Veterans much needed jobs and creating unsafe working conditions for the existing workforce that’s trying to keep commerce moving in and out of our ports. In anticipation of cargo and job growth induced from the Panama Canal expansion and to ensure the competitiveness in the Port of New York and New Jersey, NYSA and the ILA negotiated a hard-fought landmark six-year Collective Bargaining Agreement in 2013. This agreement demonstrates a commitment from both the NYSA and ILA to improve efficiency and productivity in the port. The Waterfront Commission is destroying it all.”

The coalition is also supported by former Governor and state Senator Richard Codey; Senator Raymond Lesniak, Assemblyman Joe Cryan, and Assemblywoman Annette Quijano, whose district includes the Port of Elizabeth.

“The Waterfront Commission's nonfeasance and inaction is hurting the competitiveness of the ports of Elizabeth and Newark, the economy of the State of New Jersey, and thousands of workers supported by port businesses,” said Senator Lesniak.

“The port is a major economic engine for the State of New Jersey. The Waterfront Commission’s inaction is affecting state and local economies, job creation, port competitiveness and security,” said Codey. “The Waterfront Commission, Shippers and Unions need to come together and work towards a solution.”

"The Waterfront Commission's reign over our ports is impeding commerce, stifling job creation, and impacting security" said Quijano. " The impact of the current manpower shortage reaches

far and wide, affecting both local and Turnpike traffic and the retailers and independent truckers who rely on the timely delivery of these goods to earn a living. At a time when our ports are under intense pressure from other Atlantic Coast ports and we're still struggling to revive our economy, we can't afford to sit back while one of the nation's busiest ports is held hostage by this arcane bureaucracy."

"These are good paying jobs that our community and our economy need," said Cryan. "The Waterfront Commission should not stand in the way."

In 2007, New Jersey enacted legislation (P.L.2007, c.167) to open the hiring books to allow shippers and labor to ensure staffing levels meet demand. However, to be implemented, an identical measure has to be enacted by the New York's state Legislature and governor.

Additional quotes:

New Jersey General Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto (D-Hudson/Bergen): "The Port of New York and New Jersey is under intense pressure from the competing Atlantic Coast ports, and the lack of flexibility to hire and train workers in a timely manner is impeding the port's economic growth, needlessly contributing to unemployment and hurting our overall state economy. New Jersey has done its part to ensure a healthy and vibrant port that will help drive the region's economy and provide jobs for hard-working families, but it's long past time for New York – after nearly seven years - to follow suit. I will soon post legislation pushing New York to finally do the right thing, and it will receive significant bipartisan support. I will keep fighting for New Jersey workers and our economy until these needed changes become reality."

Edward Kelly, Executive Director, Maritime Association of New York & New Jersey: "It is essential that the Waterfront Commission cease their obstruction in this matter, and allow the employers and employees to determine the proper number of workers that are necessary to run this business. Should this port not have an adequate, well-trained and efficient longshore workforce, these jobs will be permanently lost to other ports, in other states, who are anxious to steal our trade and jobs. Should we lose these jobs, we will also lose many more of our member's maritime-related jobs that are also dependent on the robust maritime business in our port."

Gail Toth, Executive Director New Jersey Motor Truck Association (NJMTA): "The labor shortage has caused severe congestion which has cost the trucking industry millions of dollars in lost revenue, the loss of customers who have rerouted freight and the loss of truck drivers who do not want to wait 5-10 hours just to pick-up one container. Without trucks, the port stops!"

Michael McGuinness, CEO, NAIOP New Jersey: “ How is it possible that in an intelligent 21st century society that the policy makers in our great states of New York and New Jersey, which have the third busiest port in the nation, that the fate of our logistics and warehouse/distribution industry – the only industry in New Jersey for which we have complete confidence in its future growth - is being held hostage by a single agency that is not being held accountable?”

Randolph Brown, President, Metropolitan Marine Maintenance Contractors' Association: “In a safety conscious society, riddled with high unemployment and lacking good job opportunities, the Commission’s actions are intolerable and completely contrary to reason and sound judgment.”

John R. Holub, President, New Jersey Retail Merchants Association: “Seventy percent of all economic activity revolves around consumer spending, and the retail industry accounts for one of every four jobs in New Jersey. The inability to get products off the docks and into our stores has a significant negative impact on retailers, and also on the state economy as a whole. Enough is enough, the bureaucracy at the Waterfront Commission needs to be eliminated.”

Daniel J. O'Connell, NJ State Director, SMART Transportation Division (former United Transportation Union): "It's important to remember the railroads -- Norfolk Southern (NS), CSX and CP Rail -- have alternatives to using the Port of New York and New Jersey. NS has Norfolk, VA.; CSX has Jacksonville, FL; and CP Rail has Halifax, Nova Scotia. If the personnel issue at the Port impacts the railroad's business, freight could be diverted to these other ports costing our metropolitan region jobs and the economic activity that flows from that."

Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers: “Automakers have made a significant investment in New Jersey. In fact, the state is the industry’s East Coast home. Of the nineteen U.S. seaports importing vehicles, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey ranked second in the total number of vehicles entering the United States in 2012, second only to Brunswick, Georgia and ahead of seven other East Coast seaport options. The Port of New York and New Jersey handled 707,416 vehicle imports and exports in 2012 as vehicle trade increased by over nine percent from the previous year. The port has the ability to further grow vehicle trade in the coming years, but a suitably staffed, skilled workforce is needed. Manufacturers support efforts to fill these needed jobs with high-quality applicants.”