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Government Relations Update
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It has been a very busy interim period. This government relations report provides an update on key issues as we move into the fall and prepare for the November 5th General Election and the 2025 legislative session.

There are serious concerns following the tragic boat accident in Old Saybrook during the evening of September 2, Labor Day. The boat accident took the lives of three people and injured nine others. This serious incident has prompted U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney to ask the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to look at implementing risk mitigation measures. State Rep. Devin Carney, who represents Old Saybrook in the state legislature, is also looking into safety measures. U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal has requested the U.S. Coast Guard to install new safety measures around the jetty at the mouth of the Connecticut River in Old Saybrook. We will keep CMTA members updated on any measures that are implemented.

Energy prices and high electric bills continue to lead the debate right now in Hartford. The governor has met with the legislative leadership, but no specific actions have been announced to address the issue. A Special Session could be held if bipartisan support can be leveraged for a proposal that makes sustained reductions to the electric bills consumers are receiving.

We are continuing to set the stage to seek funding for the new law that created a Small Harbor Improvement Projects Account. This was Public Act No. 24-48. For the first time ever, according to the statute, this account could include funding that marinas can use for facility improvements or costs associated with dredging. The issue will be discussed as part of the next two-year budget that will be adopted by the 2025 legislative session of the General Assembly. The start of the budget process will occur soon as state agencies develop their requests for funding and submit them to the Office of Policy and Management. The new Small Harbor Improvement Projects Account falls within the CT Port Authority.

In the meantime, CMTA's government relations team effort continues to have state Senator Cathy Osten host a remote meeting every six weeks or so to discuss dredging. Participants, in addition to a number of CMTA members, includes local legislators such as state Senator Martha Marx and state Senator Heather Somers, staff from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the CT Port Authority, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney and his staff. We have found these meetings to be invaluable as far as sharing information and updates. We will continue to apprise CMTA members of the discussions that occur.

The Comptroller issued his report on the state's budget situation on September 3, and the news in general is good. The general fund has a surplus of $113 million while the special transportation fund is also in the black at $126 million. Of note is that revenues increased above projections. We are continuing to hear chatter that progressive legislators will look to make the tax structure more progressive next session. As we have indicated, this could affect the 2.99 sales tax rate on boat sales. We will keep you updated as this could be a major issue next session.

The changes announced several months ago have taken effect at the CT Port Authority. Ulysses Hammond has retired, and the board is continuing to look for his replacement. Meanwhile, David Kooris has stepped down as chairman of the CT Port Authority board and has been succeeded by Paul Whitescarver.

Regarding the November 5 election, the ballot will include the presidential race, a U.S. Senate seat and the five U.S. House seats. At this point, most observers feel the Harris-Walz ticket will win the state's seven electoral votes. U.S. Senator Chris Murphy is projected to win an easy victory for a third term while four incumbent U.S. Representatives are projected to win their races. The one exception is the 5th Congressional district seat now held by three-term U.S. Rep. Jahana Hayes. This race with former state Senator George Logan, a rematch of the 2022 race, is considered to be close.

Regarding the Connecticut General Assembly, all 151 seats in the state House will be on the ballot as will all 36 seats in the state Senate. Democrats are favored to hold their majorities in both chambers.