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New Report Highlights State ‘Best Practices’ to Ensure Washington’s Maritime Sector Competitiveness

State lawmakers and regulators need to take action to reaffirm the state’s commitment to maritime industry

SEATTLE – According to a new [study released](#) this week sponsored by the Washington Maritime Federation examining the health of Washington’s maritime industry, the authors conclude that new competitive pressures in the global supply chain and certain intrastate dynamics have the potential to slow the modernization of the state’s port system. The paper charts out a public policy course for Washington State officials to support a robust maritime industry, beginning with the port and logistics sector.

*“The maritime sector is more integral to the survival of Washington’s economy than any other state in the nation,” said **David Matsuda**, former U.S. Maritime Administrator in the Obama Administration and co-author of the report. “But the Evergreen State’s historic role as a gateway to Pacific markets is a competitive advantage that can no longer be viewed as static in our increasingly interconnected world.”*

Along with **Steven Rothberg**, co-author and partner at Kirkland-based Mercator International LLC, with almost 40 years of experience in transportation network design, port infrastructure development, and strategic planning, the paper reviews successful maritime policies adopted in other North American ports such as those in British Columbia, Canada, and Savannah, Georgia and compares those successes with Washington’s opportunity slate, gleaning ways that they can be transposed to fit the state’s needs and contribute to a thriving maritime economy.

The report identifies three specific policy recommendations that Washington could adopt that have worked well for other North American ports. They are:

- **Better harness freight infrastructure investments;**
- **Improve infrastructure project siting and project delivery processes; and**
- **Engender greater coordination between government and industry port stakeholders.**

“Public policy decisions matter,” said Matsuda. “Washington State policy planners face the ongoing challenge of modernizing port infrastructure through direct spending and luring investment to support efficient transportation services and associated jobs, but often the diverse maritime industry gets overlooked.”

In addition to the comprehensive recommendations, the authors also outline various actions items that can be taken by Washington officials to implement these themes and position the maritime industry for growth and job creation with the expansion of trade.

Vince O’Halloran, president of the Sailors’ Union of the Pacific and WMF member stated that “port expansions, and the jobs they create, are the lifeblood of thousands of families across the state that



depend on trade and its infrastructure. We must generate an environment in Washington that safeguards the economic activity and thousands of jobs this industry supports and encourages future growth.”

*“This study shows that much work remains to ensure the long-term health of our state’s maritime industry, which provides family-wage jobs and long-lasting career opportunities for the middle class,” said **Mark Gleason**, executive director of the WMF. “Our elected officials in Olympia must take action this session to ensure state policies are designed to be competitive in attracting necessary investments, deliver project permitting alignment and predictability engender greater coordination between port stakeholders.”*

An executive summary of the report can be found [here](#) or a link to the full paper can be found [here](#).

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Washington Maritime Federation

The Washington Maritime Federation is comprised of labor, business and maritime organizations across the state that are committed to keeping middle class communities strong, and supporting the long term commercial viability of our ports and industry in a global marketplace. For more information, please visit www.maritimefederation.com.