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Walter W. Wise
General President

NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ALLIANCE

March 4, 2014

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Shaheen:

The National Infrastructure Alliance (NIA) strongly supports S. 2063, the Strengthen and Fortify Existing Bridges Act of 2014, legislation designed to help repair and replace the nation's faltering bridges. The NIA – a partnership between four of the nation's leading construction unions, the International Union of Operating Engineers, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, the Laborers' International Union of North American, and the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers – appreciates your leadership to address this critical problem facing the nation's transportation system.

The legislation authorizes \$2.75 billion in both fiscal year 2014 and fiscal year 2015 for states to rehabilitate and replace structurally deficient, functionally obsolete, and fracture-critical bridges. According to the Department of Transportation, there are currently 66,749 structurally deficient and 84,748 functionally obsolete U.S. bridges. This dramatic problem clearly demands a solution; S. 2063 is part of the answer.

The I-5 Bridge that collapsed into the Skagit River in Washington State was rated as functionally obsolete and surpassed its 50-year expected lifespan. It is a stark example of the risk to public safety associated with the country's inadequate bridges. The bridge collapse also represents a serious economic problem. Now a key commercial artery of the national highway system, which links Canada to the Puget Sound and the rest of the transportation network, has been virtually severed, resulting in delays and inefficiencies in the movement of goods and people.

While many States have worked hard to reduce the backlog of deficient bridges, declining federal support for bridge infrastructure has significantly slowed their progress in recent years. S. 2063 will reverse this harmful trend, while improving safety and creating jobs.

The National Infrastructure Alliance supports the Strengthen and Fortify Existing Bridges Act of 2014 and looks forward to working with you to enact it into law in this session of Congress.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical safety and jobs issue.

Sincerely,

Raymond J. Poupore
Executive Director

Building America's Infrastructure

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