



GREAT LAKES  
LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

September 9, 2015

Dear U.S. Senator from the Great Lakes Region,

Last year, almost 50 members of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus (GLLC) reached out to the U.S. senators from the Great Lakes region to relay our strong opposition to the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act of 2014 (S. 2094) (our letter is attached for reference). The GLLC is a nonpartisan, binational organization of state and provincial legislators representing the eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces that are home to the Great Lakes. One of our primary goals is protection and restoration of the Great Lakes. Our concerns with S. 2094 stemmed from our desire to see strong standards in place to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species in our shared waters.

Unfortunately, the language contained in S. 2094 has resurfaced this year in S. 373, the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act of 2015. The provisions of S. 373 now threaten to make their way into the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2015 (S. 1611) as Title VIII. As GLLC members, we are writing to reiterate the concerns we raised in our 2014 letter.

We recognize the benefit of having a single uniform standard that would apply across all the Great Lakes. Indeed, we have long hoped for the establishment of a strong, uniform federal standard that would adequately protect the Great Lakes from the introduction of new aquatic invasive species through ballast water. In the absence of such a standard, some states have exercised their Tenth Amendment right to establish their own protective standards for the benefit of the Great Lakes and the citizens who rely upon them for commerce, drinking water, and recreation.

The language of S. 373 would establish an insufficient federal standard for ballast water discharges and would effectively prohibit the states from exceeding that inadequate federal standard. The legislation would reverse the improvements made by many of our states to protect the Great Lakes from ballast water discharges. In addition, the exemption in Section 807(b) for vessels operating exclusively within “geographically limited areas” could result in all ships throughout the Great Lakes being exempt from ballast water discharge laws.

If passed, S. 373 would represent an unnecessary overreach by repealing state regulations that are preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species in lake and river basins across the United States. We feel strongly that authorizing the important work of the Coast Guard should neither put the Great Lakes in jeopardy nor undermine the ability of states to take creative, effective approaches to preventing the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species within their waters.

We urge you to oppose this effort to undermine necessary environmental protections. Please help us defend our Great Lakes from aquatic invasive species by rejecting any efforts to enact the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act as Title VIII of S. 1611.

Thank you for taking the time to understand our position on this legislation and its potentially devastating impacts on our waters. We would appreciate a response to help us understand where you stand on this important issue for the Great Lakes region.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Lisa Janairo of the GLLC staff at 920.458.5910 or [ljanauro@csg.org](mailto:ljanauro@csg.org).

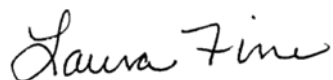
Sincerely,



Representative Cory Mason, Chair, Wisconsin



Senator Pamela Althoff, Illinois



Representative Laura Fine, Illinois



Representative Robyn Gabel, Illinois



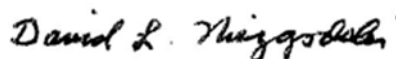
Senator Donne Trotter, Illinois



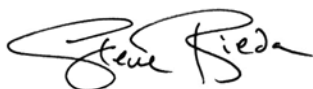
Representative B. Patrick Bauer, Indiana



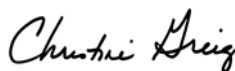
Representative Donna Harris, Indiana



Representative David Niezgodski, Indiana



Senator Steve Bieda, Michigan



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Representative Jeff Irwin, Michigan



Senator Rebekah Warren, Michigan



Representative Rick Hansen, Minnesota



Senator Alice Johnson, Minnesota



Representative Sandra Masin, Minnesota



Representative Joe Mullery, Minnesota




Senator Sandra Pappas, Minnesota



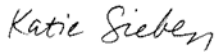
Senator Ann Rest, Minnesota



Representative Jennifer Schultz, Minnesota



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Representative JoAnn Ward, Minnesota



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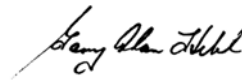
Representative Terese Berceau, Wisconsin



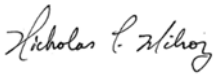
Representative Dave Considine, Wisconsin



Representative Evan Goyke, Wisconsin



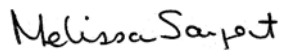
Representative Gary Hebl, Wisconsin



Representative Nick Milroy, Wisconsin



Representative Tod Ohnstad, Wisconsin



Representative Melissa Sargent, Wisconsin

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