

October 21, 2021

Dear Member of the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation:

The Great Lakes Navigation System is a critical driver of economic activity and jobs throughout North America. The region's \$6 trillion economy depends on the safe and efficient movement of raw materials throughout the year, including winter months when ice cover on the Great Lakes complicates navigation.

The Great Lakes Commission (GLC) urges Congress to pass the Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act (H.R. 1561 and S. 576), which would codify the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) icebreaking mission into law and set a path for reasonable performance metrics. The Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act, recently renamed as the Great Lakes Winter Shipping Act, was added to H.R. 4350, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on September 23, 2021. The Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act was also passed by the Senate Commerce Committee, demonstrating bicameral support for this legislation.

The GLC also requests full funding for acquisition of an additional heavy Great Lakes Icebreaker (GLIB). The GLC is pleased to see \$350 million included for the project in the Build Back Better Act (H.R. 5376) as introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. While the Senate bill has not yet been introduced, an amendment to the Senate Budget Resolution to fund the GLIB passed by a vote of 85 to 13.

For decades, the USCG has lacked adequate Great Lakes icebreaking resources to respond to ice dam-induced flooding and to keep the winter supply chain safe and open. In 1979, the USCG operated fourteen icebreaking vessels on the Great Lakes, including two heavy icebreakers. Today, it operates nine, which includes only one heavy icebreaker.

In February 2021, during a relatively mild winter, Michigan residents along the St. Clair River experienced severe flooding because of an ice dam. Unfortunately, the USCG Cutter MACKINAW, which is the only heavy icebreaker on the Great Lakes, was in a maintenance period and unavailable. The smaller icebreakers lacked the capability to adequately address this incident. Icebreakers, including and especially the GLIB, are crucial tools in the region's climate resiliency toolbox, as we continue to experience high water levels and increased frequencies of polar vortices. Other areas vulnerable to the impact of ice dams include Buffalo, NY, Fairport, OH, Rocky River, OH, Toledo, OH, Monroe, MI and Milwaukee, WI.

The Great Lakes Navigation System is the pilot light for North American manufacturing. In addition to iron ore, winter movements include energy cargoes, grain, and road salt. Inadequate icebreaking can and has cost the region dearly. An analysis done by the economists at Martin Associates on behalf of the Lake Carriers' Association determined that inadequate icebreaking during the winters of 2014, 2015 and 2019 combined to cost the region over \$2 billion in economic activity and 11,000 jobs.

The Great Lakes needs both an additional GLIB as an immediate fix and appropriate USCG icebreaking performance metrics to determine the future fleet necessary to protect our citizens from flooding and to keep our supply chain connected.

Thank you for your continued support of the Great Lakes. If you have questions or would like any additional information, please contact Eric Brown at (202) 821-6230 or via email at ebrown@glc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erika Jensen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Erika Jensen
Executive Director