



March 9, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi:

TONY EVERS
CHAIR
Governor of Wisconsin

MIKE DEWINE
VICE CHAIR
Governor of Ohio

ANDREW CUOMO
Governor of New York

ERIC HOLCOMB
Governor of Indiana

JB PRITZKER
Governor of Illinois

TIM WALZ
Governor of Minnesota

GRETCHEN WHITMER
Governor of Michigan

TOM WOLF
Governor of Pennsylvania

DAVID NAFTZGER
Executive Director

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The Great Lakes Governors encourage Congress to approve the Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act, S. 576 and H.R. 1561. This legislation codifies into law the US Coast Guard's (USCG) responsibilities for icebreaking on the Great Lakes to minimize commercial disruption in the winter months.

The Great Lakes St. Lawrence region is home to approximately 100 million people and 20 percent of the world's surface freshwater. It is an economic megaregion with a \$6 trillion economy. Maritime transportation is a backbone of the region's economy, and icebreaking is critically important to the efficiency and competitiveness of the regional maritime system. The nation's manufacturing industry and Great Lakes commercial shipping depend on icebreaking, and increased icebreaking capacity will help the businesses and people that rely on the maritime industry to transport their goods to market and grow our regional economy. The Great Lakes St. Lawrence region and the entire nation rely on the manufacturing industry for economic success and growth.

Icebreaking is critically important to the movement of commercial and other vessels on the Great Lakes. Icebreaking supports the national steel manufacturing industry by providing access to the supply of raw materials, especially iron ore and limestone shipped across the Great Lakes by vessels. Great Lakes commerce has suffered in recent years due to inadequate USCG icebreaking capabilities during winter shipping seasons. According to the Lake Carriers' Association, inadequate icebreaking capabilities on the Great Lakes during the winters of 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2018-2019 combined cost the US economy \$2 billion.

The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors' and Premiers' regional maritime strategy identifies icebreaking as a critical component of maritime system management and recommends that "US icebreaking capability should be increased in the (Great Lakes St. Lawrence Maritime System) by adding a second "Great Lakes Class" icebreaking vessel to the US fleet to restore and maintain critical system function." The Congress has already authorized construction of a new "Great Lakes Class" icebreaking vessel.

The Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act:

- Requires USCG to break ice in the Great Lakes in accordance with the reasonable demands of commerce and performance standards set forth in the bill. These performance standards are written to allow the USCG to size its icebreaker fleet to be capable of handling most ice seasons while limiting excess capacity. They do this by adjusting performance standards based on the severity of the ice season and applying them to all US Great Lakes waters except adjacent to piers or docks where commercial icebreaking services are available.
- Defines “reasonable demands of commerce” as “the safe movement of commercial vessels transiting ice-covered waterways in the Great Lakes, regardless of type of cargo, at a speed consistent with the design capability of Coast Guard icebreakers operating in the Great Lakes.”
- Requires USCG to coordinate icebreaking operations with commercial vessel operators.
- Requires USCG to report to Congress on each icebreaking season.
- Amends the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (Public law 116–283) to increase the amount for acquisition of a new Great Lakes Class icebreaking vessel to \$350 million.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you in support of the Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act. Thank you for your continued partnership to create jobs and expand economic opportunity throughout the Great Lakes St. Lawrence region and the nation.

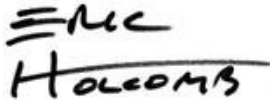
Sincerely,



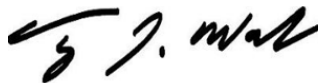
Tony Evers
Chair, Council of Great Lakes Governors
Governor of Wisconsin



Mike DeWine
Vice Chair, Council of Great Lakes Governors
Governor of Ohio



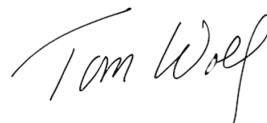
Eric Holcomb
Governor of Indiana



Tim Walz
Governor of Minnesota



Gretchen Whitmer
Governor of Michigan



Tom Wolf
Governor of Pennsylvania