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Baldwin, Peters, Bipartisan Colleagues Urge Trump Administration to Include New Great Lakes Icebreaker in Upcoming Budget Proposal

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Gary Peters (D-MI) today led a bipartisan group of Senators to urge the administration to include adequate funding for the Coast Guard to acquire a new Great Lakes icebreaker. In their letter—also signed by Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Rob Portman (R-OH) Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Tina Smith (D-MN), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Todd Young (R-IN)—the Senators requested the administration prioritize funding in the 2021 budget request to Congress. They sent the letter to Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, Department of Homeland Security Acting Secretary Chad Wolf and United States Coast Guard Admiral Karl Schultz.

“The Coast Guard is required by law to maintain a heavy icebreaking capability on the Great Lakes to keep our region’s ports and harbors open and facilitate our nation’s free flow of commerce. However, the current maintenance condition of the existing icebreaking fleet has resulted in 182 lost operating days last winter primarily due to engine failures,” wrote the Senators. “We respectfully request adequate funding for the acquisition of a Great Lakes icebreaker in your FY 2021 budget request.”

Icebreaking capacity in the Great Lakes supports more than 90 million tons of cargo annually. A study commissioned by the Lake Carriers’ Association found that during the 2018–2019 ice-season, businesses that depend upon the Great Lakes maritime industry lost over \$1 billion in revenues because of delays caused by inadequate icebreaking.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Baldwin successfully secured additional funding needed to help build a second Great Lakes Icebreaker [in the defense spending legislation that was signed into law in December 2019.](#)

Full text of the letter can be found below:

Dear Director Mulvaney, Acting Secretary Wolf, and Admiral Schultz;

As the Administration works to finalize its FY 2021 budget request to Congress, we urge you to include adequate funding to support the Coast Guard’s acquisition of a Great Lakes icebreaker.

Icebreaking capacity supports the movement through the Great Lakes of more than 90 million tons of cargo annually. According to a study commissioned by the Lake Carriers’ Association, businesses that depend upon the Great Lakes maritime industry lost over \$1 billion in revenues because of delays caused by inadequate icebreaking during the 2018–2019 ice-season. Vessel delays also resulted in the loss of 5,421 jobs dependent upon the efficient delivery of cargo throughout the Great Lakes Region.

The Coast Guard is required by law to maintain a heavy icebreaking capability on the Great Lakes to keep our region’s ports and harbors open and facilitate our nation’s free flow of commerce. However, the current maintenance condition of the existing icebreaking fleet has resulted in 182 lost operating days last winter primarily due to engine failures. To this end, Congress has authorized the Coast Guard to acquire a new Great Lakes icebreaker at least as capable as the heavy icebreaker the MACKINAW (WLBB-30), and has directed and provided funding for the Coast Guard to establish a major program acquisition office to support the design and procurement of a vessel.

We respectfully request adequate funding for the acquisition of a Great Lakes icebreaker in your FY 2021 budget request. Thank you, in advance, for your consideration of our views.