

# Alliance for the Great Lakes: Congress moves to roll back rules meant to prevent invasive species

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**(May 18, 2017) Chicago** – Today, the U.S. Senate’s Commerce Committee voted to move the U.S. Coast Guard Authorization Act out of committee and to a full vote in the Senate. The bill includes a provision, the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA), that would eliminate U.S. EPA’s authority over ballast water pollution and roll back rules that protect the Great Lakes from invasive species. In response, the Alliance for the Great Lakes issued the following statement.

“Invasive species, like zebra mussels and round gobies, have wreaked havoc on the Great Lakes. Brought in via ballast water tanks on ocean-going ships, invasive species out-compete native species and destroy habitat. They also cost people in Great Lakes communities hundreds of millions of dollars a year. Unfortunately, the shipping industry has convinced some Senators to try to roll back the rules that protect the lakes from these harmful critters.

Despite knowing of the threat posed by invasive species since the early 1980s, it has taken two acts of Congress, a lawsuit, and states passing their own rules to get federal requirements for actual ballast water treatment systems onboard ships in place in 2008. But even after the U.S. EPA and Coast Guard started that process, excessively long timelines for phasing in the regulations mean most ships on the Great Lakes still do not have ballast water treatment installed.

Why has it taken so long for Congress and federal agencies to act? Shippers have asked for special treatment and exemptions from U.S. law over and over. And it is happening again.

New invasions are all too real. In 2016 a [new species of zooplankton](#) was found in Lake Erie. Given that this critter is from the other side of the planet, researchers say that ballast water is a likely way it entered the lakes. Yet rather than installing treatment technology to stop these invasions as quickly as possible, shippers are staying busy convincing Senators to roll back existing rules.

Several members of the Great Lakes Congressional delegation aren't buying it, and are working hard to fight off this bad ballast bill. But we need all of them. We urge the Senate to remove these harmful provisions from the U.S. Coast Guard Authorization Act.

We heartily applaud the efforts of Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Gary Peters (D-MI), and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), all members of the Senate's Commerce Committee who voted no on this bill because of VIDA."