

U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Introduces bill to strengthen Great Lakes winter commerce

Posted on Friday, Feb 14, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI), alongside Reps. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Bob Gibbs (R-OH), and Debbie Dingell (D-MI), today introduced the Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act, which would clearly define the United States Coast Guard's (USCG) responsibilities for icebreaking on the Great Lakes to meet the reasonable demands of commerce. Currently, the USCG conducts icebreaking on the Great Lakes based on an Executive Order signed by President Franklin Roosevelt over 94 years ago that fails to clearly define the icebreaking mission. This bill would codify clear standards into law to best fit America's economic needs. Click [HERE](#) for bill text.

*"In recent years, we've seen insufficient icebreaking hurt Northeast Wisconsin businesses and our Great Lakes economy," **said Rep. Gallagher.** "It's critical we do all we can to keep these shipping lanes open during winter months to ensure Northeast Wisconsin businesses can efficiently get their products from point A to point B."*

*"The shipping lanes throughout the Great Lakes are critical to the economic success of not only our region, but our country," **said Rep. Kaptur.** "There is a long tradition of the Coast Guard's important task to keep our shipping lanes free of ice in the winter so commerce can continue uninterrupted, but it's time we modernize the mission. This legislation codifies the Coast Guard's ice breaking mission on the*

Great Lakes and will provide Congress with a better sense of the demands associated with the mission. With a closer understanding we can allocate necessary resources more appropriately. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their partnership in advancing this important legislation.”

*“The Great Lakes economy relies on safe and well-maintained commercial lanes. That reliance doesn’t end in the winter months. The Coast Guard carries out multiple missions, including icebreaking. Unfortunately the Great Lakes region has been frustrated in the past by insufficient icebreaking operations that results in shipping delays, lost revenue, and lost wages. This bill will help keep the lanes of commerce on the Great Lakes open year-round,” **said Rep. Gibbs.***

*“The Great Lakes economy and its ability thrive depends on year round access to shipping lanes,” **said Rep. Dingell.** “During the winter months, the flow of commerce on the Lakes can be severely affected by ice. The Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act is a bipartisan effort that aims to provide clear direction and greater certainty by codifying the U.S. Coast Guards icebreaking mission.”*

The Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act would:

- Codify the USCG’s Great Lakes icebreaking mission into law with its own performance standards.
- Require the USCG to report to Congress on the operational costs based on meeting these new performance standards.
- Require the USCG to report annually to Congress on their icebreaking activities on the Great Lakes.
- Require the USCG to coordinate icebreaking operations with commercial vessel operators.
- Define ambiguous terms from the USCG’s Great Lakes icebreaking mission including “open to navigation” and “reasonable demands of commerce.”

–

Background:

Annually, U.S. Great Lakes waterborne commerce supports more than 147,000 jobs, \$20.3 billion in business revenue, and \$10.5 billion in wages across eight Great Lakes States.

###