

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

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI) today introduced the Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act, a bill that would clearly define the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) responsibility for icebreaking on the Great Lakes. Currently, the USCG conducts Great Lakes icebreaking based on a 95-year-old Executive Order that fails to clearly define the USCG's mission. This bill would update that mission to help ensure it meets the modern demands of commerce in the Great Lakes region.

Rep. Gallagher introduced the bill alongside a bipartisan group of Great Lakes members, including Reps. Kaptur (D-OH), Gibbs (R-OH), Dingell (D-MI), Joyce (R-OH), Gwen Moore (D-WI), Bergman (R-MI), Huizenga (R-MI), Stauber (R-MN), and McClain (R-MI). Click [HERE](#) for bill text.

"In cold winter months, icebreaking helps keep our Great Lakes economy moving. But a lack of sufficient icebreaking in recent years has shown that Congress needs to modernize the Coast Guard's icebreaking mission on the Great Lakes," said Rep. Gallagher. "The Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act is a bipartisan, bicameral bill codifying an icebreaking performance standard to meet the reasonable demands of commerce. This will help ensure that small businesses in Northeast Wisconsin can continue shipping goods from point A to point B — no matter the month or the weather."

"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."

"Because the Great Lakes power our region's economy, we cannot allow thick ice to freeze our commerce and growth. With this bipartisan bill, we can ensure our shipping routes are open and accessible to the businesses who rely on them," said Rep. Dingell.

"The Great Lakes aren't just an invaluable natural resource, they're also an economic powerhouse," said Congressman Dave Joyce, Co-Chair of the House Great Lakes Task Force. "By codifying the U.S. Coast Guard's icebreaking mission, our bipartisan legislation will help prevent shipping delays, revenue loss, and lost wages. I look forward to working with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to get this bill signed into law so that we can preserve the Great Lakes economy and the more than 1.5 million jobs it supports."

"As the Representative of a district that relies heavily on Great Lakes shipping and taconite, I know that delays in icebreaking on Lake Superior can take a serious toll on our economy. That's why I am pleased to cosponsor legislation that will empower the U.S. Coast Guard to keep our region's ports and harbors open, and subsequently, help spur our critical economic drivers," said Rep. Stauber.

"This winter, towns along the St. Clair River are experiencing widespread flooding due to thick ice forming on the river. It's apparent now more than ever that we need an additional heavy icebreaker in the Great Lakes region to meet the demands of the winter months and prevent flooding," said Rep. McClain. "Since coming to Congress, I've worked with the Coast Guard on coordinating additional Ice Cutters to the region. I'm proud to take the next step in getting Michigan's 10th District the help it needs, by cosponsoring the Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act, which will ensure we get this much needed ice cutter in our region."

Insufficient icebreaking can lead to cargo ships being stuck in port for days at a time in winter months, with the Lakes Carrier Association estimating that this alone cost Great Lakes businesses lost nearly \$1 billion in revenue in the 2018-2019 winter season.

The Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act would fix this problem by:

- Codifying the USCG's Great Lakes icebreaking mission into law with new performance standards.
- Requiring the USCG to report to Congress on the operational costs based on meeting these new performance standards.
- Requiring the USCG to report annually to Congress on their icebreaking activities on the Great Lakes.
- Requiring the USCG to coordinate icebreaking operations with commercial vessel operators.
- Defining ambiguous terms from the USCG's Great Lakes icebreaking mission including "open to navigation" and "reasonable demands of commerce."
- Authorizing the appropriations of a new Great Lakes icebreaker at least as capable as the current Mackinaw-class icebreaker.

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.