

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Bill to increase icebreaking in the Great Lakes passes Senate Commerce Committee

Posted on Thursday, Apr 29, 2021

>> **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. – The Senate Commerce Committee approved U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin’s bipartisan *Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act* to update the U.S. Coast Guard’s icebreaking mission on the Great Lakes and increase the icebreaking capacity of the Great Lakes fleet. The legislation will now move to the full Senate floor for a vote.

“Inadequate icebreaking capacity in the Great Lakes is costing us thousands of American jobs and millions in business revenue. We must boost our icebreaking capacity in the Great Lakes to keep our maritime commerce moving,” **said Senator Baldwin, Chair of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Oceans, which oversees the U.S. Coast Guard.** “I’m proud to see this bipartisan effort move forward in the Senate and bring the Great Lakes region closer to getting the sufficient icebreaking resources needed to support our maritime industry, mitigate devastating climate-related events and protect our Great Lakes for generations to come. I will keep working with my colleagues to get this job done for Wisconsin businesses and workers.”

Icebreaking is critical in the Great Lakes, and supports more than 90 million tons of cargo annually. Increasing icebreaking capacity will help the many businesses and workers that rely on the maritime industry to transport their goods to market and grow the regional economy. 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. These economic losses resulted in the loss of over 5,000 jobs throughout the Great Lakes Region.

Baldwin is joined on the legislation by U.S. Senators Todd Young (R-IN) and Gary Peters (D-MI), and the companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives is led by Reps. Mike Gallagher (R-WI) and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH). The legislation has strong support from more than 120 organizations throughout the Great Lakes region and the maritime industry.

“The movement of the Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act through the Senate Committee is an extremely important bi-partisan step in a positive direction. We look forward to working with all members to enact Great Lakes icebreaking legislation this Congress,” **said Jim Weakley, President of the Lake Carriers’ Association.**

More information about the legislation is available [here](#). The full bill text is available [here](#).