

U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Applauds House passage of Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI), a member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, today applauded the passage of his [Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act](#), legislation he wrote that would authorize funds for an additional Great Lakes icebreaker and modernize the Coast Guard’s icebreaking mission in the region.

The bill, which was included in the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act, helps ensure trade routes and ports across the Great Lakes – including in Green Bay – don’t freeze over in the winter and halt commerce.

“Here in Northeast Wisconsin, insufficient icebreaking capabilities hurt local businesses and can literally freeze the Great Lakes economy. The Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act helps fix this problem by modernizing the Coast Guard’s icebreaking mission and authorizing funds for an additional Great Lakes icebreaker. I’m thrilled to see it pass the House and urge my colleagues in the Senate to quickly pass this bipartisan bill to ensure that we keep the Great Lakes economy moving – no matter the weather,” said Rep. Gallagher.

Rep. Gallagher originally introduced this bill in [February](#) of 2020, after insufficient icebreaking in the 2018-2019 winter season caused cargo ships to be stuck in port for days at a time. This resulted in Great Lakes businesses losing nearly \$1 billion in revenue according to the Lakes Carrier Association.

The issue of [insufficient icebreaking](#) stems from an 86-year-old Executive Order that fails to clearly define the Coast Guard’s icebreaking mission in the Great Lakes. This bill modernizes and clarifies the Coast Guard’s mission to ensure the Coast Guard is operating under the “reasonable demands of commerce” for 2022, not 1936.

The bill also:

- Codifies the USCG’s Great Lakes icebreaking mission into law with new

performance standards.

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

The bill now moves onto the Senate before it becomes law.