

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to sign the attached letter to the House Appropriations Committee to support funding for the National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) at \$68.41 million for Fiscal Year 2004, an \$8 million increase over FY03 appropriations. In 2002, Congress overwhelmingly supported a substantially higher authorization (of \$91 million) with passage of HR3389, after an extensive review of the program. It is now time for appropriations to follow the rising tide of Sea Grant support.

For over 35 years, Sea Grant has proven its value to U.S. taxpayers as a program that supports rigorous, high quality research that is directly responsive to the concerns of coastal constituents. Over 300 Sea Grant institutions across 31 programs collaborate to respond to issues of national and regional importance using partnerships which bring together federal, state, and private sectors for extraordinary return on a modest federal investment.

However, over the last two decades, Sea Grant has lost significant opportunities to address the nation's critical coastal, marine, and Great Lakes issues simply because appropriations have not kept pace with inflation and demand. Indeed, Sea Grant's "buying power" has actually decreased by more than 25% during that time. Increased appropriations for Sea Grant are necessary to offset this deficit and enhance its ability to address the ever-increasing public demand for information to address critical economic, environmental, and societal needs.

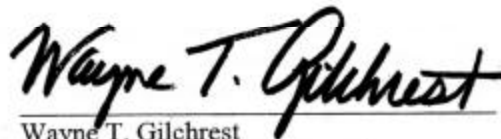
We invite you to sign the attached letter to the House Appropriations Committee to support this funding for the National Sea Grant College Program for Fiscal Year 2004.

If you are interested in signing this letter, please contact Edith Thompson in Congressman Gilchrest's office at x55311 or Sunshine Menezes in Congressman Pallone's office at x54671.

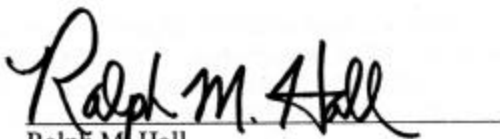
Sincerely,



Sherwood L. Boehlert
Chairman, Committee on Science



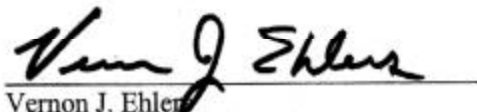
Wayne T. Gilchrest
Chairman, Fisheries Conservation,
Wildlife and Oceans, National Parks, Recreation
and Public Lands Subcommittee



Ralph M. Hall
Ranking Member, Committee on Science



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member, Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife
and Oceans, National Parks, Recreation and Public
Lands Subcommittee



Vernon J. Ehlers
Chairman, Environment, Technology
and Standards Subcommittee

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
H-218 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Congressman Obey:

We are writing to urge you to fund the National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) in Fiscal Year 2004 at \$68.41 million, an \$8 million increase over the program's current FY03 appropriation, and well within the authorized levels provided for in the National Sea Grant College Program Act Amendments of 2002 (P.L.107-299).

The coastal zone is the most densely populated and widely used area in the country; 56% of the nation's civilian income is derived from coastal areas. We cannot have healthy coastal economies without investing in wise coastal resource management. The National Sea Grant College Program has proven its value to taxpayers as a program that supports rigorous, high quality, and competitive research that is directly responsive to the concerns of coastal constituents. For this reason, Congress overwhelmingly approved reauthorization of the Sea Grant program in 2002 and significantly increased its authorized funding levels, demonstrating enormous Congressional support for this program.

For nearly four decades, the National Sea Grant College Program has provided an extraordinary return on a rather small federal investment. Federal dollars appropriated to the Sea Grant program are leveraged and matched by state and private funds. The 31 Sea Grant programs, located in coastal and Great Lakes states, serve as the core of a dynamic, national network of over 300 participating institutions involving more than 3,000 scientists, engineers, educators, students, and outreach experts. The program's distinguishing feature is policy- or mission-relevant science linked to an extensive outreach and education network. This structure assures that Sea Grant research is useful to marine resources users and managers.

Since its establishment in 1966, Sea Grant has developed long-standing working relationships with a broad spectrum of stakeholders in every coastal state. Because Sea Grant is non-regulatory and science-based, it serves as an "honest broker" among a wide range of constituents. Sea Grant supports research, extension, and education activities in a wide range of areas that foster healthy marine ecosystems, sustainable living marine resource development, economically viable and safe coastal communities, new technologies for ocean development, management, and coastal observations, and education and human resources development for the 21st century. The program also encourages stakeholder participation and community interest since it requires that one-third of the program's funding comes from non-Federal sources.

However, over the last 20 years, Sea Grant has lost significant opportunities to address the nation's critical coastal, marine, and Great Lakes issues simply because its base appropriations have not kept pace with inflation and demand. Indeed, Sea Grant's "buying power" has actually decreased by more than 25% during that time. Increased base appropriations for Sea Grant are necessary to offset this deficit and enhance its ability to address the ever-increasing public demand for information to address the nation's critical economic, environmental, and societal needs. Further, Sea Grant has been authorized for work in four priority areas: fisheries extension, aquatic nuisance species, oyster disease research, and harmful algal blooms. Unfortunately, Sea Grant has been asked to sacrifice its base funding to support these priority areas.

Based on Sea Grant's remarkable assets and potential, we again urge you to provide a total of \$68.41 million for Sea Grant funding in Fiscal Year 2004, reflecting an \$8 million increase to Sea Grant over FY03 appropriations. Of the \$8 million increase, we ask that \$5 million be added to Sea Grant's base program to both help restore Sea Grant's "buying power" that has been lost due to inflation and enhance Sea Grant's ability to meet the ever-increasing public demand for information and services, and that

\$3 million be added to support the Sea Grant fisheries extension program priority that will enable Sea Grant to permanently fulfill the Congressional mandate to place additional fisheries extension agents "on the docks" to address critical fisheries issues and needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,