

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 10, 2003

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
State and the Judiciary
Committee on Appropriations
S-146A Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
State and the Judiciary
Committee on Appropriations
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Gregg and Hollings:

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; fifty-six percent 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, which is 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 funding has not kept pace with inflation and demand. Indeed, Sea Grant's "buying power" has actually decreased by more than twenty-five percent during that time. Increased base appropriations for Sea Grant are necessary to cure this erosion in base funding 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,

Stephen Snow

Paul Sabane

C. H. Sitter

P. L. Chafe

Tom F. Kelly

John Breau

Fabrice Leaky

Mike Dewine

Patty Murray

J. Biden

Robert A. Mikulski

Barbara Boxer

John Edwards

Paul Cochran

Joe Biden

Carl Sca

Bill Nelson

Nora Colonna

Susan Collins

Debbie Stabenow

Jack Reed

Don Wyar

David Keck

John F. Sununu

Cal L.

John Warner

John Warner

George Allen