

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 29, 2007

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski, Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
and Science Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
and Science Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Senator Shelby:

We are writing to urge you to appropriate \$72 million in base funding to the National Sea Grant College Program in Fiscal Year 2008. This recommendation is the same as the amount supported by the Senate for the last two years and is well within the \$103 million level authorized in the National Sea Grant College Program Act Amendments of 2002 (P.L. 107-299). Appropriating this request would reverse the significant reductions taken by the program in fiscal years 2006 and 2007 and, more importantly, sustain ongoing research, education and outreach efforts, address emerging needs, and continue assisting NOAA in carrying out its many missions.

The Administration requests another year of flat funding for Sea Grant in FY 2008. The implications of a hard funding freeze with respect to the nation's economy, sustainability of natural resources, and national safety and security are significant. With the costs of research and education rising, the flat-funding of Sea Grant during the last few years has forced programs to cut jobs and leave countless high-quality research projects unsupported. The Sea Grant network cannot sustain current activities, staff, and operations within this budget scenario.

In January 2007, the Bush Administration released its interagency Ocean Research Priorities Plan. Several of the plan's priorities dovetail with Sea Grant's strength, experience, and relationships with state and local decision makers and ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resource managers. To assist in the implementation of the interagency plan, Sea Grant requires a budget that is commensurate with the level of service the American public has grown to expect from Sea Grant. Below are two examples of how Sea Grant contributes towards meeting the objectives embodied in the interagency Priorities Plan:

Increasing Resilience to Natural Hazards. Coastal areas of the United States comprise only 10% of our nation's land mass, yet they are home to over half of all Americans. As witnessed by recent record-breaking storm seasons, coastal

communities and the natural resources and infrastructure on which they depend are at increasing risk from hurricanes, tsunamis, coastal storms, shoreline change, and sea level rise. Sea Grant institutions and its partners pool research, education and outreach capabilities to enhance mitigation, preparedness, planning, education, response, and recovery in coastal communities throughout the nation.

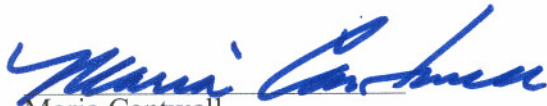
Stewardship of Natural and Cultural Ocean Resources. Domestic seafood production has not kept pace with consumer demand; the United States imports an ever-increasing amount of seafood consumed domestically. Issues with quality assurance and consistent supplies are increasing. At the same time, the nation's commercial seafood industry is threatened by the loss of coastal access and multiple use conflicts in coastal waters. Sea Grant institutions, through the use of its fisheries extension, address the increasing needs of the nation's seafood industry by utilizing expertise in seafood safety and technology and marine aquaculture.

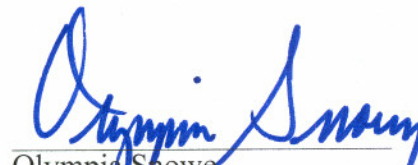
For four decades now, the National Sea Grant College Program, as a key component of NOAA's extramural research, education and outreach enterprise, has led the quest for practical solutions by providing research and education on national coastal and Great Lakes issues. Federal dollars appropriated to the Sea Grant program are leveraged and matched by state and private funds. The 32 Sea Grant programs, located in every coastal, Great Lakes and Gulf Coast state, conduct policy-relevant research linked to an extensive outreach and education network. This structure ensures that Sea Grant research is useful to coastal resource managers at the regional, state and local levels, marine-related businesses and industries, and most importantly the general public.

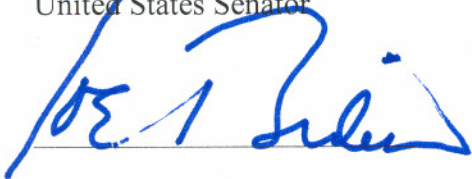
Sea Grant has established long-standing working relationships with a broad spectrum of stakeholders in every coastal state. As a science-based and non-regulatory program, Sea Grant is viewed as an honest broker among a wide range of constituents. The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy called on Congress in its 2004 report to expand the Sea Grant program in conjunction with a doubling of all ocean and coastal research funding. Please make this the year that turns the tide for Sea Grant by providing \$72 million for FY 2008.

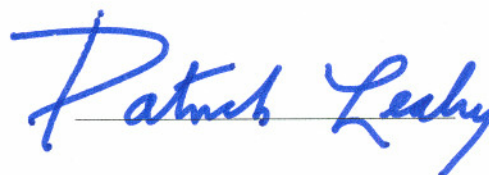
Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


Maria Cantwell
United States Senator


Olympia Snowe
United States Senator





Carl Levin

Chris Dodd

Tom F. Kelly

Elizabeth Dole

Bob Duff

Joe Lieber

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Jack Reed

Robert Menendez

John Warner

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