

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 15, 2026

The Honorable Admiral Kevin E. Lunday
Commandant
United States Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Admiral Lunday,

We write to request the immediate completion of multiple overdue congressionally mandated United States Coast Guard (USCG) actions supporting Great Lakes icebreaking, and to prioritize the Great Lakes Region in future operations. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026, and past authorizations, included multiple requirements for public transparency, strategic deployment, and new construction of Great Lakes icebreakers, which have yet to be fulfilled. Prioritizing and completing these overdue requirements are a necessary commitment to commerce, national security, and safety throughout the Great Lakes region.

The Great Lakes region represents a \$6 trillion regional economy for millions of Americans, holds 90 percent of United States' fresh surface water, and directly supports over a million jobs.¹ USCG icebreaking efforts fall into two major operations, Operation Coal Shovel and Operation Taconite, to ensure safe maritime transportation across the Great Lakes.² These operations are paramount to our shared region, ensuring continuous maritime transportation throughout the winter months, suppling Great Lakes industries, and providing maritime safety to the people of the Great Lakes.

Successful icebreaking operations depend on a fully operational fleet, and there have been concerning setbacks requiring additional action and resourcing. Last season, the USCG Great Lakes icebreaking fleet operated at reduced capacity with engineering concerns on multiple vessels, including the USCG's heavy icebreaker, the MACKINAW.³ The impact from this reduced capacity was felt immediately. U.S.-flagged shipping on the Great Lakes lost a third of its season in 2026, adversely impacting billions in economic activity.⁴

¹ Great Lakes Commission – [About the Great Lakes Commission](#)

² United States Coast Guard - [Coast Guard Concludes Domestic Icebreaking Operations in the Eastern United States and Great Lakes Following Severe Winter Season](#)

³ Michigan Public Radio - [Down 2 icebreakers, Coast Guard says it's still prepared for Great Lakes shipping season](#)

⁴ Bridge Michigan - [Great Lakes Shipping Lost Third of Season to 'Inadequate icebreaking'](#)

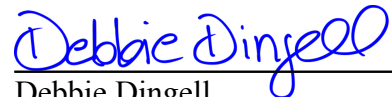
To ensure the USCG can continue maintain Great Lakes winter maritime transportation, Congress enacted specific requirements supporting the region. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026 required the USCG to outline how it will design, build, and deliver a new Great Lakes icebreaker at least as capable as the heavy icebreaker MACKINAW, by March 18, 2026.⁵ Additionally, the law required a strategic report detailing the replacement of the Bay Class icebreaking tug fleet, including a maintenance plan if replacement will take more than five years by June 16, 2026.⁶ Finally, the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 included provisions requiring a publicly accessible database for icebreaking operations in the Great Lakes during ice season, which has also not yet been produced.⁷ These required reports are critical to ensure a fully operational Great Lakes icebreaking fleet, and we urge you to expeditiously complete these requirements.

We are grateful for the service provided by the men and women of the United States Coast Guard, and we urge you to prioritize the Great Lakes region during your expansion of the Coast Guard capacity and force size. Great Lakes icebreaking is essential for a prosperous region, and we look forward to your completion of these requirements before the next ice season.

Sincerely,



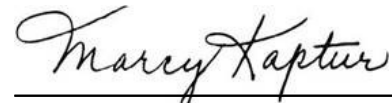
Kristen McDonald Rivet
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress

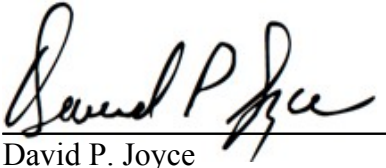


Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

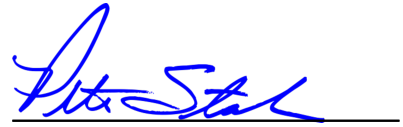
⁵ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026 (Public Law No: 119-60) – [Section 7215](#)

⁶ i.e.

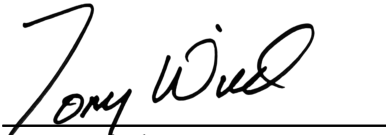
⁷ James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (Public Law No: 117-263) – [Section 11213](#)



David P. Joyce
Member of Congress



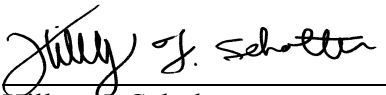
Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



Tony Wied
Member of Congress



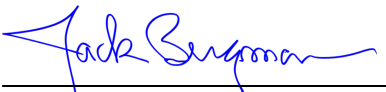
Max L. Miller
Member of Congress



Hillary J. Scholten
Member of Congress



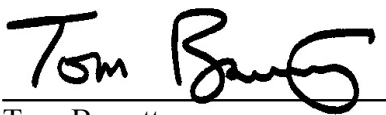
Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Jack Bergman
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



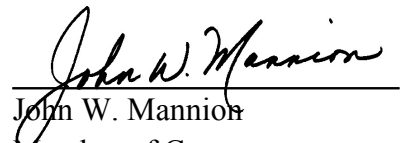
Tom Barrett
Member of Congress



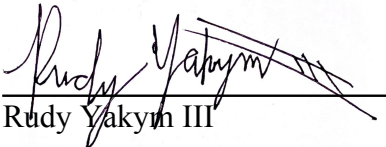
Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



John W. Mannion
Member of Congress



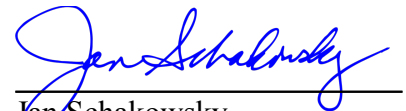
Rudy Yakym III
Member of Congress



Frank J. Mrvan
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress