

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2202

May 1, 2009

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
144 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
144 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

As you prepare for the Fiscal Year 2010 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill, I ask that you provide \$1.5 million for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to inventory vessel wrecks and assess the risks of oil and other hazardous materials leaking from these shipwrecks in U.S. coastal waters, including the Great Lakes. This program is a preventative approach to spills and would save taxpayer money over the long term by taking a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to mitigating the risks of such spills.

Based on an analysis of NOAA's "Undersea Threats" database, there are over 7,000 shipwrecks in the coastal waters of the U.S., including the Great Lakes. Many of these underwater vessels have tanks filled with oil and other hazardous materials that pose risks to coastal communities and wildlife. This program should be protective of our nation's maritime heritage, and should not disclose the location of historical sites, which could then be threatened by treasure-hunters. To protect the historical sites, this program should focus on shipwrecks that have oil stored and pollution prevention.

Thank you for your consideration of this programmatic request which would minimize the risk and costs of pollution from sunken commercial vessels. If your staff have any questions about this request, please have them contact Alice Yates at 224-2683.

Sincerely,



Carl Levin