

(April 24, 2008) Lipinski Votes to Protect Great Lakes from Invasive Species

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Helps Pass Provision Regulating Ballast Water Discharges that Threaten Lakes

[Washington, D.C.] Today, Congressman Dan Lipinski helped pass a provision that will protect our nation's waterways, including the Great Lakes, from invasive species. The provision, which was passed as part of H.R. 2830, the Coast Guard Authorization of 2008, would ensure that by 2015 no ballast water discharged by ships in U.S. water will contain viable living organisms.

"The cost of invasive species on our economy and ecosystem is enormous," said Rep. Lipinski. "Zebra mussels in the Great Lakes have decimated fish populations while causing thick and sometimes toxic algae blooms. By some estimates, we spend \$100 to \$400 million annually just trying to control these mussels. Fortunately, today's legislation will significantly reduce the future threat of invasive species such as zebra mussels, and I am proud to have helped pass this bill."

Ballast water is taken onto or discharged from a ship as it loads or unloads its cargo, to accommodate changes in its weight. However, organisms often also get taken on with the ballast water. If that ballast water is later discharged into another body of water, the organisms on board will be introduced into a new environment and could become invasive species.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 30% of invasive species in the Great Lakes, including Zebra mussels, were first introduced through ballast water. To prevent future incidents of invasive species, H.R. 2830 would require that all ships conduct ballast water exchange operations at least 200 miles off U.S. shore. The bill would also mandate that all vessels have a water treatment system that meets international standards.

“This is a common sense provision that will improve the environment, protect native species, and ensure that resources like the Great Lakes continue to be productive and enjoyable for future generations,” said Rep. Lipinski. “I hope that the Senate passes this bill quickly and I look forward to continuing to work to protect our nation’s waters.”