



## Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

April 13, 2018

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Great Lakes Senator:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, I ask you to oppose S. 1129, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2017, if it includes Title VIII, the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA).

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition represents more than 150 non-governmental organizations in all eight Great Lakes states. We consist of environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, community groups, zoos, aquariums and museums. Our groups represent millions of people whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes region, like most areas of the country, has a long history of dealing with aquatic invasive species introduced and spread by ballast water. Since the St. Lawrence Seaway opened in 1959, ballast water discharges have been the primary source of non-native plants and animals that have wreaked havoc across the Great Lakes. These new species, such as zebra and quagga mussels, have not stayed in the freshwater of the Great Lakes spreading across the country costing our nation billions annually. The cost to damaged public water systems, energy generation systems, and commercial and recreational fisheries is in the hundreds of millions in the Great Lakes region alone.

The Senate is now poised to take up legislation that could undermine the protections for the drinking water of 30 million Americans. VIDA weakens ballast water cleanup rules, which are critical to prevent new species from invading the Great Lakes. It eliminates Clean Water Act authority over ship discharges including ballast water and removes the U.S. EPA from its scientific role in deciding what standards are needed to protect waterways across the country, including the Great Lakes. It would exempt ships that operate solely on the lakes. And it would preempt states' rights to protect their waters.

To fully protect the Great Lakes we must have the toughest standards. VIDA does not come close to meeting that principle. I ask you to stand up for the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes and oppose S. 1129 if it includes VIDA. Please let me know if you have questions. I can be reached at (202) 454-3385 or [clord@npca.org](mailto:clord@npca.org).

Sincerely,

Chad Lord  
Policy Director