



December 4, 2018

The Honorable Dick Durbin
United States Senator
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we thank you for fighting to protect the Great Lakes from the threat of aquatic invasive species. Your tireless efforts dramatically improved the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) so it upholds many core protections to prevent future invasions.

For years there have been efforts to undermine clean water protections that prevent aquatic invasive species from being introduced or spread by ballast water. Rolling back those protections could have led to more environmental and economic devastation brought by aquatic invasive species. Instead, the bill the Senate recently passed listens to science and the public, which demanded the strongest protections possible.

The improved version of VIDA that passed the Senate includes several provisions that are important to the Great Lakes. It maintains the regulation of ballast water and incidental discharges under the Clean Water Act. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets standards for these discharges while the U.S. Coast Guard ensures technologies function safely for vessels and handle monitoring and enforcement. The bill uniquely allows Great Lakes states to work together to go beyond the requirements of federal law to protect the Lakes if enough states agree. The bill also authorizes \$50 million to improve monitoring and rapid response to new aquatic invasive species found in the Great Lakes and to support the development of technologies to better protect the lakes from polluted ballast water.

None of these things existed in prior versions of VIDA. They exist because of your hard work. We deeply appreciate your commitment to the Great Lakes and your efforts to improve this bill.

Sincerely,

Molly M. Flanagan
Alliance for the Great Lakes

Mary Smith
Church Women United in New York State

Katie Rousseau
American Rivers

Brian Smith
Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Rev. Edward Pinkney
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Deanna White
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