

The BoatBlue Coalition

www.boatblue.org

November 9, 2007

Dear House Boating Caucus Member:

The undersigned organizations are writing to strongly encourage you, as a member of the Congressional Boating Caucus, to cosponsor H.R. 2550, “the Recreational Boating Act of 2007,” which will preserve recreational boating, sportfishing, and an array of water-based recreation that is currently being threatened by unnecessary federal regulation resulting from a recent court decision in California.

House Boating Caucus Co-Chairs Gene Taylor and Candice Miller introduced H.R. 2550, “the Recreational Boating Act of 2007,” last May. Since that time, the legislation has garnered 45 bipartisan cosponsors who understand that a longstanding, commonsense exemption from the Environmental Protection Agency’s National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for non-harmful, incidental discharges associated with the normal operation of a recreational boat should remain in place.

If Congress does not act soon, the 18 million recreational boats in operation nationwide will be required to obtain a NPDES Permit from the EPA and individual States by September 2008. This requirement emerged from a court decision to require Clean Water Act regulation of ballast water, but it extended to all vessel discharges. H.R. 2550’s restoration of the exemption for incidental discharges other than ballast water would have no effect on existing, separate regulations that prohibit the discharge of oil, hazardous pollutants, untreated sewage, and garbage and debris.

About 73 million Americans—one-third of all adults—went boating in 2006. There are nearly 18 million recreational boats in operation across the nation, and spending on new boat sales and services topped \$39.5 billion in 2006 alone. Many of these boaters are also sport anglers and hunters, a 34-million strong demographic that has an annual national economic impact of \$76 billion. Hunters and anglers spent \$11 billion on boat fuel, boats and related equipment last year, and the \$40 billion sportfishing industry supports more than one million U.S. jobs. Recreational boating supports 855,000 jobs nationwide.

Requiring a federal, Clean Water Act permit for all 18 million recreational boats currently in operation for non-harmful, water-based discharges such as deck run-off, engine cooling water, and uncontaminated bilge water would cause severe economic hardship for these industries and significantly drive down participation in outdoor recreation, all while having no real environmental benefit. There are significant barriers—economic and cultural—to participation in outdoor recreation now. Adding a federal permitting requirement, which could cost several hundred dollars per boat, will substantially exacerbate these perceived disincentives.

H.R. 2550 has strong bipartisan support and is a sensible legislative remedy to restore the longstanding incidental discharge exemption that has been in place for 34 years. In addition to the 45 cosponsors in the House, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chair Barbara Boxer has publicly pledged to exempt recreational boaters and anglers from this onerous permitting scheme.

Passage of a legislative remedy to restore this longstanding, commonsense exemption is the most significant legislative issue facing recreational boating. We strongly urge you to cosponsor H.R. 2550, “the Recreational Boating Act of 2007,” and advocate for its expeditious passage in the Congress well in advance of the September 2008 permitting deadline.

We appreciate your consideration of our views on this important legislation. For more information, please contact Dylan Jones (djones@nmma.org; (202) 737-9776) or Mathew Dunn (mdunn@nmma.org; (202)-737-9760).

Sincerely,

American Recreation Coalition	Marine Industries Association of Florida
American Sportfishing Association	Marine Industries Association of South Florida
American Watercraft Association	Marine Retailers Association of America
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	Marine Trades Association of Maryland
Association of Marina Industries	Marine Trade Association of New Jersey
Berkley Conservation Institute	Massachusetts Marine Trades Association
Blue Ribbon Coalition	Michigan Boating Industries Association
Boat Owners Association of the United States	National Association of Manufacturers
California Association of Harbor Masters and Port Captains	National Association of State Boating Law Administrators
Center for Coastal Conservation	National Boating Federation
Chicago Yachting Association	National Marine Manufacturers Association
Coastal Conservation Association	New York Marine Trade Association
Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation	Northwest Marine Trade Association
Connecticut Marine Trade Association	Personal Watercraft Industry Association
C-PORT, National Association for the Marine Assistance Industry	Pure Fishing
Federation of Fly Fishers	Recreational Boaters of California
Lake Erie Marine Trades Association	Southern California Marine Association
Maine Marine Trade Association	Southwest Florida Marine Industries Association
	USA Water Ski