

## NMMA Supports U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea

### BACKGROUND

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is an international treaty governing the world's oceans. The treaty entered into force in 1994 and today has 143 official signatories. In February 2004, with the support of the President Bush, the Departments of Defense and State, the Coast Guard, and a coalition of industry groups, including NMMA, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee unanimously voted to send the treaty to the full Senate for consideration. No further action on the treaty has been taken since that time. President Bush will soon resubmit the necessary treaty documents to the Senate for advice and consent.

The Law of the Sea treaty protects the rights of navigational freedom, upholds national jurisdiction over the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), enhances marine scientific research and environmental protection, and proposes fair methods for resolving international disputes. NMMA believes that the U.S. should move expeditiously to ratify and accede to the treaty.

### ISSUE

NMMA supports U.S. ratification of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The treaty has the support of virtually every major industry group it would affect because it provides needed protections and reforms and is manifestly good for business.

- **UNCLOS Will Strengthen the Recreational Boating Industry.** The United States has one of the longest coastlines in the world, with recreational boating and coastal tourism being crucial parts of the national economy. These industries are possible only if the U.S. maintains healthy marine environments—UNCLOS provides the U.S. with the international legitimacy to do just that.
- **UNCLOS Guarantees Trade.** Ensuring unimpeded commercial navigation is crucial to the U.S. economy, with 95 percent of U.S. trade tonnage moving by sea. It is also crucial to the marine manufacturing industry, which exported nearly \$1 billion in boats and products last year alone. UNCLOS guarantees navigational freedoms and secures open and efficient trade routes by preventing excessive jurisdictional claims made by coastal nations.
- **UNCLOS Levels the International Playing Field.** Official U.S. participation in the treaty would strengthen America's efforts to guide the development of internationally accepted vessel pollution standards. U.S. marine manufacturers already adhere to some of the highest standards in the world.
- **UNCLOS Supports U.S. Fishing Interests.** The treaty promotes a balanced fisheries management regime. UNCLOS' provisions on fisheries management are entirely consistent with U.S. domestic fisheries laws as well as U.S. international fisheries agreements and understandings.
- **UNCLOS Makes the High Seas Safer.** UNCLOS will provide greater legal protections against piracy for the nearly 400,000 U.S. recreational boats 65 feet in length or longer and the many recreational boats between 300 and 400 feet that regularly travel the high seas.
- **UNCLOS Makes Environmental Sense.** The Law of the Sea treaty imposes basic obligations of environmental protection on all states. Because the U.S. is already an environmental leader, not a single domestic environmental law would need to be changed upon ratification.