

The Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act

Senator Tammy Baldwin and Senator Todd Young

In Short:

The bill would update the outdated Coast Guard's Great Lakes icebreaking mission and increase the icebreaking capacity of the Great Lakes fleet. Icebreaking is critical for commerce in the Great Lakes and increasing icebreaking capacity to meet the actual need will help the many businesses and workers that rely on the maritime industry to ship their goods.

Why is Legislation needed?

28% of our nation's GDP is generated in the Great Lakes region, including the bulk of U.S. integrated steel manufacturing. Great Lakes commerce has suffered in recent years due to insufficient icebreaking during the winter season. According to the Lake Carriers' Association, vessel delays due to lack of icebreaking in the **2018-2019** winter season alone cost business that depend on the region's maritime industry **\$1.04 billion in lost revenues** from an estimated loss of the equivalent of 21 shiploads of coal and 860 shiploads of iron ore. These economic losses resulted in the **loss of 5,421 jobs** dependent on the U.S. flagged fleet's ability to deliver cargo throughout the Great Lakes Region. Similar problems occurred during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 winters.

The need to safeguard the viability of these shipping lanes cannot be exaggerated. Annually, U.S. Great Lakes waterborne commerce supports more than **147,000 jobs** in eight Great Lakes states, **\$20.3 billion** in business revenue, **\$10.5 billion** in wages, and **\$4.6 billion** in federal and state taxes. The Great Lakes waterways facilitate interstate and international commerce and the USCG clears Great Lakes shipping lanes during the ice season. Despite this, no statute requires the USCG to break ice in the Great Lakes. Instead, the USCG follows a 1936 Executive Order requiring them to conduct icebreaking "in accordance with the reasonable demands of commerce" without much definition of when, where, and what that is.

What does this Bill do?

Adds a new section to title 14 USC:

1. **Codifies into law the USCG's icebreaking mission in the Great Lakes.** Requires the USCG to break ice in the Great Lakes in accordance with the reasonable demands of commerce set forth in the bill. The standards derive from a 1997 Coast Guard study outlining icebreaking requirements on the Great Lakes. They are written to allow the USCG to size its icebreaker fleet to be capable of handling the vast majority of ice seasons while limiting excess capacity. The bill includes a one-time report by on the operating costs associated with this new performance standard.
2. **Requires USCG to report to Congress on the icebreaking season.** Requires an annual report of USCG activities during the previous winter's icebreaking activities.
3. **Requires USCG to coordinate with industry for icebreaking operations.**
4. **Requires the USCG to prioritize domestic icebreaking mission before breaking ice for Canadian harbors or bays,** but allows for exceptions for missions related to safety of life.
5. **Defines "reasonable demands of commerce."** "The safe movement of commercial vessels transiting ice-covered waterways in the Great Lakes at a speed consistent with the design capability of Coast Guard icebreakers operating in the Great Lakes."

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Supporting groups

Lake Carriers' Association	American Great Lakes Ports Association
Great Lakes Maritime Task Force	International Longshoremen's Association
American Maritime Officers	International Shipmasters Association
American Maritime Officers Service	Key Lakes Shipping
American Steamship	Kokosing Industrial
Andrie	LafargeHolcim
ArcelorMittal USA	International Brotherhood of Boilermakers
Carmeuse	Lake Erie Coal and Ore Dock Council
Central Marine Logistics	Lake Michigan Carferry Service
Cleveland-Cliffs	Lakes Pilots Association
Consumer Energy Alliance	Lorain Port Authority
Detroit Wayne County Port Authority	Lower Lakes Towing
Donjon Marine	Marine Engineers Beneficial Association
Duluth Seaway Port Authority	Masters Mates and Pilots Union
Fincantieri Bay Shipbuilding & Marine Group	MCM Dredging
Fraser Shipyards	Michigan Maritime Trades Port Council
Grand River Navigation	Pere Marquette Shipping Company
Great Lakes Fleet	Port City Marine Services
American Maritime Congress	Port of Cheboygan
Great Lakes Shipyard	Port of Cleveland
Great Lakes Towing Company	Ryba Marine
Inland Lakes Management	Seafarers International Union
Interlake Steamship	Soo Marine Supply
International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers	The American Waterways Operators (AWO)
International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers Lodge 60	Transportation Institute
VanEnkevort Tug and Barge	Western Great Lakes Pilots Association