Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 25, 2012

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
H-307 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers:

Our oceans support more than 28 million American jobs. This activity, along with Coastal and Great Lake States maritime activities contribute to more than 80% of our domestic economy. Proper stewardship of this vital resource will always remain a National interest. Concerns have been raised, however, that the National Ocean Policy, created by Executive Order 13547, may not only restrict ocean and inland activities, but may also take scarce funds away from federal agencies and divert resources away from congressionally authorized activities that are critical to the ocean and coastal economies.

The proposed policy guidelines and processes in the National Ocean Policy have the potential to change the permitting criteria and requirements for a large number of economic sectors including agriculture, fishing (recreational and commercial), development of traditional and renewable energy, mining, power production, inland river transportation, maritime shipping, manufacturing, housing development, recreational boating, and tourism, among others. At a time when we are looking at all opportunities to address our struggling economic recovery, it is important that we closely examine how this overly ambitious effort will affect jobs as well as ocean, coastal and inland economies. Moreover, it appears that the National Ocean Policy lacks sufficient authorization by Congress.

In addition to concerns about the uncertain impact of the new National Ocean Policy on business, concern has also been raised about the amount of federal spending that has already been spent on implementing this Policy and how much will be required in the future. The recently released draft National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan lays out an ambitious agenda for federal agencies to accomplish beginning in 2011. While this Implementation Plan has yet to be finalized, this agenda currently includes 59 actions or milestones for federal agencies to accomplish in 2012 and another 92 in 2013.

Federal agencies have yet to explain where the funding for these new actions and milestones will come from and what other activities' funding might be affected. At a time when federal funding is stretched thin, allowing agencies to redirect funding for these new activities will certainly take money away from existing mandates and activities.

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We urge you to impose a "time out" so that these questions can be answered before more federal funds are reprogrammed towards the implementation of the National Ocean Policy. We request that language be included in all relevant appropriations legislation for FY 2013 that would prohibit the use of funds for implementing the National Ocean Policy.

Sincerely,

Walter B. Jones

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