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Thursday, May 15, 2008

House Committee Passes Clean Boating Act of 2008, Moves Bill to Full House for Consideration

Time running out for America's boaters; NMMA continues call for action

Chicago, IL -

May 15, 2008 - - The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) today applauded the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee (T&I) for approving commonsense legislation introduced by Representatives Steve LaTourette (R-Ohio) and Candice Miller (R-Mich.), Co-Chair of the House Boating Caucus.

The Clean Boating Act will ensure recreational boaters and anglers, including un-inspected charter fishing boats, will not need federal permits to operate their boats. The T&I Committee, chaired by Rep. James Oberstar (D-Minn.), approved H.R. 5949, the Clean Boating Act of 2008, by voice vote, paving the way for its consideration by the full House of Representatives.

“The Clean Boating Act is a bipartisan, good government solution to a looming administrative and legal crisis for boaters across America,” said Scott Gudes, NMMA vice president of Government Relations. “On behalf of America’s recreational marine industry and the nation’s 59 million adult boaters, NMMA thanks Chairman Oberstar, Ranking Member John Mica (R-Fla.), Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chair Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Tex.), Rep. LaTourette, Rep. Miller, and all the Committee members for moving this crucial bill forward.”

“NMMA also wishes to thank Rep. Gene Taylor of Mississippi, Co-Chair of the House Boating Caucus, who along with Rep. Miller brought us to this important point by introducing and advocating tirelessly for H.R. 2550, the Recreational Boating Act of 2007,” added Gudes. “H.R. 2550, which accumulated nearly 100 bipartisan cosponsors, was absolutely crucial, and Congressman Taylor is to be commended.”

“Congress’ work is far from over,” Gudes continued. “We now strongly urge the full House and the United States Senate—where identical legislation has 33 bipartisan sponsors—to quickly pass this legislation and send it to the President for signature into law well in advance of the September 2008 permitting deadline.”

H.R. 5949 is identical to S. 2766, Senate legislation introduced by Senators Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) and Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) that now has 32 bipartisan cosponsors. S. 2766 is pending before the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee, chaired by Sen. Boxer.

The Clean Boating Act would fully and permanently restore a longstanding regulation that excludes recreational boaters and anglers from the federal and state permitting requirements under the Clean Water Act designed for land-based industrial facilities and ocean-going commercial ships. This

exemption was overturned by a federal court in 2006 in a case focused exclusively on ballast water from commercial vessels. The Clean Boating Act has the support of the \$37 billion recreational marine industry, the nation's 59 million adult recreational boaters and more than 50 organizations involved in outdoor recreation, sportfishing, hunting and conservation.

Chairman Oberstar pledged to soon hold a hearing on commercial vessel discharges and work on separate legislation dealing with non-recreational vessels, which he said was a more complicated issue. Oberstar urged his colleagues on the Committee to move the Clean Boating Act in a way that eases its path toward quick enactment into law.

“The Committee has done good work in passing this legislation,” said Thom Dammrich, NMMA president. “Now it is time for Congress to swiftly pass the Clean Boating Act of 2008 to not only preserve one of America's favorite ways to enjoy the great outdoors, but also the American marine manufacturing industry that provides hundreds of thousands jobs in this country. America's boaters want to protect our natural resources and deserve to enjoy the outdoors without federal red tape and excessive legal jeopardy.”

National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) is the leading association representing the recreational boating industry. NMMA member companies produce more than 80 percent of the boats, engines, trailers, accessories and gear used by boaters in the United States. The association is dedicated to industry growth through programs in public policy, market research and data, product quality assurance and marketing communications.