

The Honorable Dave Camp

Introductory Remarks

H.R. 3532, the Michigan Lighthouse and Maritime Heritage Act

Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands

September 7, 2006

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Christensen. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in support of my bill, the Michigan Lighthouse and Maritime Heritage Act. This legislation is important to Michigan residents, whose cultural identity is inexorably tied to the Great Lakes and its many marine landmarks.

Michigan owes its rich maritime history to 3,288 miles of Great Lakes shoreline. As the largest body of freshwater in the world, the Great Lakes are home to extensive marine traffic that includes a thriving shipping industry, a passenger transport system, and thousands of recreational boaters. It is not surprising, then, that Michigan is home to 120 lighthouses, more than any other state. Though no longer staffed, these lighthouses are important reminders of the State's maritime prominence and represent security to the communities that depended on them for the safe return of family and friends. In that vein, I am pleased to welcome as my witness Dr. Kirk Lindquist, President of the Michigan Lighthouse Fund and a longtime advocate for lighthouse preservation. I appreciate him being here with me today.

In addition to its many lighthouses, Michigan is also home to natural resources such as underwater preserves and the country's only freshwater marine sanctuary, the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The sanctuary contains hundreds of shipwrecks preserved by the icy waters of Lake Huron. Each one serves as a link to Michigan's maritime past.

I am also proud that my state is home to several major maritime museums and a dozen historic ships, including a replica of the wooden schooner "Madeline" in Traverse City, Michigan, which served as the city's first schoolhouse.

The Michigan Lighthouse and Maritime Heritage Act would direct the National Park Service to conduct a comprehensive study of Michigan's maritime resources—lighthouses, maritime museums, historic ships, and marine sanctuaries—and recommend how best to preserve them for future generations. I expect this effort to benefit Michigan residents who regard these sites as symbols of the Great Lakes' role in their collective identity. Likewise will every state in the country gain, as tourists travel to see maritime heritage resources firsthand.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Michigan Lighthouse and Maritime Heritage Act. It is my hope that the committee will look favorably upon this legislation and advance the Michigan delegation's bipartisan effort to preserve their state's rich maritime resources.