

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2201

July 8, 2020

The Honorable Larry Kudlow
Director
U.S. National Economic Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Director Kudlow:

Safe and robust commerce on the Great Lakes is essential to the health of our national economy. I understand U.S. Coast Guard officials briefed the National Economic Council staff on June 3rd, 2020 regarding a proposal to designate the Straits of Mackinac (“the Straits”) in Michigan under authority of the Great Lakes Pilotage Act of 1960 (“the Pilotage Act”). As Michigan’s First Congressional District is home to the Straits and covers more Great Lakes shoreline than any other district, I write to request your full and fair consideration of this proposed plan.

According to the Pilotage Act, foreign vessels must secure the services of an on-board American or Canadian pilot as a requirement for sailing the Great Lakes. The United States – and particularly Michigan – is home to the world’s hardest-working and most skilled pilots. These experienced mariners frequently navigate hazardous parts of the Lakes. The cost of the pilots is paid for by foreign shipping companies which benefit from their service. The Pilotage Act also requires a pilot to be on the bridge, helping guide any foreign ship traversing certain designated areas on the Great Lakes which are challenging for navigation. In undesignated waters, a pilot must be available but not necessarily involved in active navigation. The Straits, considered the “crossroads of the Great Lakes,” are an especially busy and complex waterway located between the northern-most tip of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. Commercial and recreational ship activity as well as one of the largest suspension bridges in the world make crossing these waters so complicated that most vessels already take measures to have an American pilot actively facilitating safe navigation from the ship’s bridge. While this practice is not required by law, listing the Straits as “designated waters” will significantly improve safety by ensuring a pilot is always on the bridge of these foreign vessels during transit through the Straits.

Under 46 U.S.C. §9302(a)(1)(B), the “president shall make water designations” under the Pilotage Act. I strongly urge your consideration of this designation of the Straits for the following reasons:

- The Straits are a geographically iconic, economically important, and environmentally critical waterway in Michigan. A Pilotage Act designation would improve safety in this



pristine yet congested part of the Great Lakes by formalizing additional navigation protection to require an American pilot at the helm.

- The Great Lakes Pilotage Advisory Committee, the formally recognized federal advisory committee for Great Lakes pilotage composed of stakeholders from all relevant parts of Great Lakes shipping, has unanimously recommended designation of the Straits.
- Following an evaluation of the Committee's recommendation, the U.S. Coast Guard found there would be essentially no additional cost imposed on foreign shipping companies by designating the Straits.
- There will be no additional costs for taxpayers.

Thank you for your interest in this important matter. I have engaged this issue over the past year to encourage designation of the Straits, and I stand ready to work with you to make this a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Bergman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jack Bergman
Member of Congress