

**THE OCEAN CONSERVANCY • OCEANA •
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW •
IUCN/WORLD CONSERVATION UNION •
NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL • SCENIC AMERICA •
ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE • NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST •
PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY •
US PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP •
LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS**

March 22, 2004

Dear Senators Inhofe and Jeffords:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the millions of members we represent, we urge your support for the Senate's advice and consent on the resolution of ratification developed by the Foreign Relations Committee for U.S. entry into the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (hereinafter UNCLOS or Convention).

UNCLOS establishes law over a vast array of issues affecting the world's oceans, ranging from maritime boundary delimitation, to fisheries management, to the rights and duties of ships with regard to navigation, to ownership of marine resources. The United States interests in becoming a signatory to the Convention are similarly broad and diverse. There is general agreement in the environmental community that, with the understandings and declarations recommended by the Committee on Foreign Relations, UNCLOS serves the environmental interests of the United States in providing a stable legal framework for the promotion of environmental decision-making over time. We urge accession at this time primarily to enable the United States to be a full participant and negotiator in the future development of the terms of the Convention. In large measure, UNCLOS is considered customary international law by the United States; therefore, we gain nothing by our failure to commit to the treaty, while we lose much.

The United States must fully engage our fellow nations and secure the cooperation of the international community if we are to be successful in protecting the oceans and their resources. Our failure to ratify the Convention has hurt not only our international credibility, but also our ability to effect future changes in the terms and agreements upon which international law is based. Both the Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission have recommended accession to secure a positive framework for U.S. ocean management. In sum, it is impossible to be a world leader relative to the health of the oceans without full participation in the international rule of law that applies to them.

We applaud the bipartisan leadership provided by Chairman Richard Lugar and Senator Biden in developing interpretive language, with the help of the Administration, clarifying how UNCLOS provisions will be implemented by the United States. Because of their efforts, U.S. full authority to protect our marine environment and resources will be

preserved and remain capable of being exercised in the future. We urge you to fully support expeditious ratification of this international agreement to allow the United States to guide and shape international ocean policy for future generations.

Sincerely,

Roger T. Rufe
President and CEO
The Ocean Conservancy

Phillip E. Clapp
President
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cc: Senator Lugar
Senator Biden
Senator McCain
Senator Hollings
Senator Kerry
Senator Warner
Senator Levin
Senator Stevens
Senator Frist
Senator Dodd