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N E W S R E L E A S E

For Details, Contact: Mike Dunmyer, Executive Director
Phone: 571-970-6827 Fax: 703-229-4103
Email: mike@oceanchampions.org

Ocean Champions Endorses Senators Leahy and Mikulski *Senate Appropriators Have History of Ocean Support*

Washington, D.C. – June 3, 2010 – Ocean Champions, which works to build political power for the oceans by helping to elect pro-ocean candidates for the U.S. Congress is proud to announce its endorsement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD).

"As an avid diver, Senator Leahy has a personal connection to the ocean, and Maryland's Senator Mikulski has shown how important the health of the Chesapeake Bay is to her state," said David Wilmot, Ph.D., Ocean Champions' President and Co-Founder. "From their important role as senior appropriators, both of these Senators have consistently supported critical ocean programs."

In his role as Chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Leahy has led the support for funding the Coral Triangle Initiative, which preserves coastal, littoral and reef resources in a sensitive habitat that is rich in biodiversity. He has also worked to address marine invasive species and received a perfect score from the League of Conservation Voters the past two years. Senator Leahy has been a true champion for Lake Champlain, directing \$80 million to clean up and protect the "sixth Great Lake."

Senator Mikulski has been committed to ocean and estuary health throughout her 35 years of public service. She's a longtime supporter of the Chesapeake Bay Program, which works across jurisdictions to bring groups together in order to reduce bay pollution and restore water quality. The Senator has also worked to reduce runoff into the bay by funding wastewater infrastructure projects. The Maryland League of Conservation Voters recognized her dedication in 2009, presenting Senator Mikulski with its prestigious John V. Kabler award for "outstanding environmental leadership and commitment."

Both Senators have taken a leadership role in responding to the BP Gulf Oil Spill. Senator Leahy said the spill shows the need for a comprehensive energy strategy driven by renewable energy. He has urged the Obama administration to greatly expand the amount of information agencies are releasing about the spill, and recently signed onto a letter seeking to block Transocean from issuing \$1 billion in dividends to its shareholders at a time when they need to cover their liabilities in the Gulf. Senator Mikulski has asked NOAA to assess the likelihood that the spill will reach the Mid Atlantic and the Chesapeake so that appropriate mitigation steps can be taken. Finally, she signed onto a letter opposing Virginia's offshore drilling plans.

Both Senators are outstanding representatives for their states, and are the best candidates to continue serving Vermont and Maryland. As ocean advocates in key appropriations positions, they are also the best candidates for ocean voters.

Ocean Champions is the only nonprofit political organization that endorses pro-ocean Congressional candidates and lobbies members of Congress on behalf of the oceans. To learn more about Ocean Champions or any of the candidates endorsed by Ocean Champions, visit www.oceanchampions.org.