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N E W S R E L E A S E

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## Ocean Champions Applauds House Passage of Legislation to Combat Toxic Algae

**Washington, D.C. – March 12, 2010** – Ocean Champions, the only political voice for the oceans, today praised House leaders for passing legislation to develop and promote a national strategy to address outbreaks of harmful and often toxic algal blooms. The bill passed amid reports of more frequent and intense harmful algal blooms (HABs) that have devastated economies, killed wildlife and threatened human health on every U.S. coast, the Great Lakes, freshwater lakes, rivers, and streams.

“Our coasts, lakes and rivers are under assault from the growing threat of harmful algal blooms,” said Dr. David Wilmot, President of Ocean Champions, “Outbreaks of harmful algae threaten the economy, jobs, public health, and fabric of coastal ecosystems and communities. As if the stories of HABs causing widespread kills of wildlife and visits to the emergency room aren’t scary enough, we know the problem is getting even worse.”

The Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act of 2009 will begin the development and implementation of a national strategy to address and reduce HABs and hypoxia. This program will fund research to advance our understanding and ability to detect, assess, predict, and control HABs and hypoxic events, and will also oversee the development and progress of regional research and action plans.

Harmful algal blooms, which often produce a toxin and occur in both salt and fresh water, are known to kill fish, marine mammals, and birds; they can contaminate shellfish with toxins and harm human health, sometimes resulting in fatalities. They shut down fisheries, sideline fishermen and drive tourists away from resorts. Researchers have estimated that HABs cost coastal communities nearly \$100 million annually. In the past year, toxic algae have contributed to fish kills in Texas and the Baltimore harbor, killed more than 10,000 seabirds off the Northwest coast, forced the closure of Maine’s shellfish harvest from April to September, contributed to record incidents of sea lion stranding along California’s central coast, and killed four pet dogs in Oregon.

Algal blooms can also cause hypoxia where oxygen is stripped from the water resulting in so-called “dead zones”. Like humans, most animals and plants need oxygen for survival and typically perish in areas such as the “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico, which averages 6,000 square miles in size.

“The American people understand how tough it is to pass legislation in the current political climate,” said Mike Dunmyer, Executive Director of Ocean Champions, “Ocean Champions would like to acknowledge and thank the many members championed this critical ocean issue and worked so hard to advance this bill. We applaud the strong leadership shown by Chairman Gordon (D-TN) and Subcommittee Chairman Baird (D-WA), Congressman Mack (R-FL) and Congresswoman Castor (D-FL), as well as their counterparts on and off the committee who helped produce a bipartisan victory for our oceans and coastal communities around America.”

*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](http://www.oceanchampions.org).*

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