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N E W S R E L E A S E

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Ocean Champions Endorses Two Florida Gulf Coast Heroes *Representatives Mack and Castor Fight For Clean Coastal Water*

Washington, D.C. – May 18, 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 Congressman Connie Mack IV (R-FL) and Congresswoman Kathy Castor (D-FL).

“Over the past two Congresses, Representatives Mack and Castor have been a highly effective bipartisan team,” said David Wilmot, Ph.D., Ocean Champions' President and Co-Founder. “They were a driving force behind an important bill to prevent and control harmful algal blooms and dead zones, and their active leadership as co-sponsors was a big part of passing it in the House this year.”

Harmful algal blooms, which plague Florida's Gulf Coast, 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, and they're getting worse. Representatives Mack and Castor's bill will establish a national strategy for fighting these toxic outbreaks and will enable scientists to understand, predict and prevent them.

Both champions have deep roots on Florida's Gulf coast, and both work hard to protect the ocean and its vital resources. Congressman Mack was an early co-sponsor for the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which governs the management of U.S. Fisheries. Congresswoman Castor has also been a strong supporter of marine wildlife conservation, and in 2009 compiled a perfect score from the League of Conservation Voters. In addition, she has been an aggressive voice for preventing new drilling off Florida's coasts and for holding BP, Transocean and Halliburton accountable for the damage their spill is causing.

Though Representatives Castor and Mack come from different sides of the aisle, they agree on the importance of healthy oceans and coasts, and are strong ocean advocates. They're great candidates for their respective districts, and great candidates for the oceans.

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.