

National Report  
21 October 2006

Congress is now in recess. Fortunately those items of concern to NBF have been resolved before the recess on 29 September. According to a columnist in the op-ed section of the Washington Post this was a light year in terms of the total number days in session and amount of legislation passed. Of course the dominate issue on the Hill is the question of whether democrats can gain control of the House in the Nov elections. Republican control of the Senate may also be at risk.

**Global Maritime Distress & Safety System (GMDSS) Implementation Task Force –**

I attended a meeting of the GMDSS Task Force in Arlington VA on 2 August. GMDSS is an upgrade of the ship to shore and ship to ship communications system worldwide. It is largely a system designed for ocean vessels but can effect recreational boating. It includes VHF radios with DSC and AIS, Automated Information Systems and Rescue 21. I have included the Summary Record of this meeting.

**Loran C** – We were successful in getting language in the DHS Appropriations bill guaranteeing continuation of Loran C operations nationwide. This was in the face of some Opposition by Senator Coburn of Oklahoma who offered an amendment to prohibit use of any FY 07 funding to operate Loran and effectively kill Loran. Fortunately Senator Stevens of Alaska and Senator Murray of Washington offered competing amendments but this would still leave only Alaska, the Pacific Northwest and the Atlantic Northeast in operation. Still at risk were the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, Gulf of Mexico and Great Lakes stations. The bill went to the joint House/Senate conferees. We sent letters to 21 Conferees along with phone calls and visits. The Conferees passed the House version of the bill and it was signed by the President on 4 October. We are gratified by the outcome of this considerable effort. With the risk of losing the GPS signal, either by normal signal loss or by intentional electronic jamming, we need a backup for GPS. That backup is Loran, the only fully redundant, viable, operational navigation system available.

**ALAB** – As previously reported in LOOKOUT the reauthorization of Wallop/Breaux was passed sometime ago with a disproportionate allocation of funds to Sports Fish Restoration, at the expense of Boating Safety. This result covers funding until FY 09. ALAB should meet again late next year to begin planning for the next reauthorization in FY 09.

**NRBSC** – The National Recreational Boating Safety Coalition will meet in Washington DC on November 1. The coalition, made up of Government, industry and private organizations, including NBF, continues to do good work affecting boating safety legislation Nationwide. To date, 33 states have Mandatory Boating Education. In 46 states we have mandatory PFD use which varies from age six and under to 14 and under, the dominant age being 12 and under. Only one state, Alabama, has operator licensing, which we oppose.

**NOAA** - Nation system for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) \_ This is a draft frame work for developing a National system for MPAs. It would consider and states: “as appropriate, the recommendations of government partners concerning a structure and function that builds partnerships with and supports the efforts and voluntary participation of state, tribal and local governments.” “Increasing impacts on the world’s oceans, caused by development, overfishing, and natural events, are straining the health of our coastal and marine ecosystems. Some of these impacts to the marine and Great Lakes environment have resulted in declining fish populations; degradation of coral reefs, seagrass beds, and other vital habitats; threats to rare or endangered species; and loss of artifacts and areas that are part of our nation’s historic and cultural heritage.” Phase 2 of the program would “identify National System gaps and future conservation priorities” This is still a draft framework for developing MPAs and public comment is invited. As is the case in some government initiatives this could limit areas from use by the boating public or eliminate them entirely.