

January 28, 2010

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
309 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510
(By fax to 202-228-0400)

Dear Senator Durbin:

The thriving commercial passenger vessel industry in Chicago, so integral to the city's tourism economy, will be jeopardized if there is a closure of the Chicago River waterway and the federally-operated lock connecting the river with Lake Michigan. On behalf of its Chicago-area members, the Passenger Vessel Association urges you to actively resist efforts to close the river and lock and instead support other more effective, less destructive measures to prevent the Asian carp from entering Lake Michigan.

In particular, please vigorously oppose H.R. 4472 and S. 2946, the so-called CARP Act.

Thank you for signing the January 6 letter from the Illinois Congressional delegation to Attorney General Lisa Madigan offering "strong support" for her spirited defense against any unjustified interference with Illinois commerce," noting that closure "could prove economically catastrophic to Illinois and the surrounding Great Lakes economies."

The Passenger Vessel Association (PVA) is the national trade association for U.S.-flagged passenger vessels of all types. PVA members in the Chicago area that operate vessel tours and charters that move through the Chicago River Controlling Works lock connecting Lake Michigan and the Chicago River include:

Chicago Cruises (Great Lakes Development LLC) (www.chicagocruises.com)
Chicago's First Lady Cruises (www.cruisechicago.com)
Chicago from the Lake, Ltd. (www.chicagoline.com)
Mercury Sightseeing Boats (www.cruisechicago.com)
Shoreline Marine Company (www.shorelinesightseeing.com)
Wendella Sightseeing Boats (www.wendellaboats.com)

Most operators offer the famous boat tours to showcase Chicago's architecture. Should the lock be closed, each would be prevented from providing lake-to-river and river-to-lake excursions, upon which their businesses rely. For Chicago vessel companies and their hundreds of employees, lock closure would be economically injurious or completely crippling. A vibrant, successful part of Chicago's tourism industry would be tossed aside.

PVA member companies operate at least 36 vessels with a combined passenger capacity of 4,115 that must pass through the Chicago River lock. Their vessels carried

at least 691,674 passengers and made at least 7,790 transits through the lock in 2009. These PVA members employ at least 604 workers in high-quality, good-paying jobs and have an annual payroll of at least \$7,033,396. Tens of millions of dollars of investment assets and resources are at risk if the passenger vessels can not be employed in their normal income-producing activity.

PVA takes seriously any credibly-demonstrated harm that could ensue to the ecology of the Great Lakes should the Asian carp establish a population there. Maintenance of healthy natural aquatic communities is crucial to PVA's vessel members that operate in Chicago and throughout the Great Lakes. Nevertheless, PVA believes that the federal government can prevent the migration of the Asian carp by employing a range of concerted actions other than closure of the Chicago River and the lock connecting the river with Lake Michigan.

Sincerely,

Edmund B. Welch
Legislative Director, Passenger Vessel Association