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May 30, 2024

The Honorable John Garamendi
U.S. House of Representatives
2004 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: *Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Removal Act of 2024 (H.R. 7719)* – SUPPORT

Dear Representative Garamendi:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), I'm writing to express our association's support for your bill, the *Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Removal Act of 2024*. This important piece of legislation would create new federal authorities and leverage existing federal funding mechanisms for the removal of abandoned and derelict vessels (ADV) from local waterways.

According to the United States Coast Guard (USCG), the state of California is home to the fourth largest number of registered recreational vessels in the nation. From California's coastal marinas to the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to the Salton Sea, communities in California host nearly 630,000 registered motorboats and sailboats. Unfortunately, each year, a significant number of vessels are abandoned throughout our state's waterways where they impede navigation and cause environmental damage to important aquatic resources.

While the California State Lands Commission has a program to remove commercial and recreational ADVs, it has limited funding to carry out this important work. As a result, the responsibility for recovering and disposing of abandoned vessels often falls to county sheriff's departments. However, like the Commission, counties and other local jurisdictions typically have very limited capacity to address this growing problem.

CSAC supports provisions of H.R. 7719 that would unlock up to \$1.5 billion annually from the federal Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund for the collection and disposal of abandoned vessels. The legislation would safeguard the long-term viability of the Trust Fund by ensuring that the owners of ADVs are liable for the cost of vessel collection by requiring that any recovered expenses be deposited back into the Fund.

We also support provisions of the bill that would significantly expand the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' authority to remove ADVs. Under current law, the Corps is only authorized to remove vessels if they present an impediment or hazard to navigation of a

federally regulated waterway. H.R. 7719 would permit the Corps to remove abandoned and derelict vessels that do *not* impede navigation, but which are a nuisance or present a threat to the environment.

Finally, CSAC supports language of the bill that would require the USCG – in consultation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and relevant State agencies – to establish and maintain a national inventory of abandoned vessels. Such an inventory would provide authorities with a more accurate accounting of ADVs in local waterways and therefore help states, counties, and other jurisdictions better manage the collection and removal of these vessels.

Again, CSAC is pleased to endorse *Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Removal Act of 2024* and we look forward to working with you to ensure its passage. If you have any questions or if you need any additional information, please contact Joe Krahn, CSAC Federal Representative, Paragon Government Relations, at (202) 898-1444 or jk@paragonlobbying.com.

Sincerely,



Graham Knaus, CEO
California State Association of Counties