THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Washington, D.C. 20230

May 2, 2007

The Honorable Richard B. Cheney
President of the Senate
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Bush Administration, I respectfully submit for congressional consideration and action a bill to reauthorize the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 1998. I also enclose a statement of purpose and need, and a section-by-section analysis.

In 2007, the Nation celebrates the 200th anniversary of its oldest scientific agency, the Survey of the Coast, which was authorized by Congress and created by President Thomas Jefferson in 1807 to conduct surveys of the coast and provide nautical charts for safe passage through the Nation's ports and along its extensive coastline. Today, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) continues this mission.

The purpose of this bill is to reauthorize the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act (HSIA), and make changes to better ensure safe, efficient, and environmentally sound marine transportation and commerce. There is a need to maintain federal expertise and capability in hydrographic data and services to support a safe and efficient marine transportation system for the enhancement and promotion of international trade and interstate commerce vital to the Nation's economic prosperity. That system is becoming increasingly congested, with the volume of international maritime commerce expected to double within the next 20 years. The programs and activities authorized by the HSIA also play an important role in the national response to natural and man-made disasters. For example, NOAA experts discovered the submerged wreckage of TWA Flight 800, took some of the first aerial images of Ground Zero after 9/11, and provided a substantial and vital response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, including surveying affected waterways to facilitate the reopening of 13 major ports to commerce and relief efforts.

The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to enact this legislation. We have been advised by the Office of Management and Budget that there is no objection to the submission of this draft bill and that its enactment would be in accord with the program of the President. If you have any further questions, please contact me or Nat Wienecke, Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at 482-3663.

Sincerely,

Carlos M. Gutierrez

Enclosures

Identical Letters Sent to:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of
Representatives

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman, Committee on Commerce
Science and Transportation
United States Senate

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, Jr.
Chairman, Committee on Natural
Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Co-Chair, Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
United States Senate

The Honorable Don Young
Ranking Member, Committee on Natural
Resources
U.S. House of Representatives