

Testimony of U.S. Representative Curt Weldon

**U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy
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Thank you, Admiral. It is great to be with you again and all your colleagues and to share some thoughts on the work that you are about to undertake. I think you have an exciting opportunity and I'm looking forward to engaging with you as you begin your deliberations.

As mentioned in my statement and as you said, my statement is submitted for the record, I come as one of the four caucus co-chairmen for ocean issues, as the U.S. Representative on the Advisory Council for Protecting the Seas which is a London-based group that involves 35 nations. And I come as someone who is very intimately involved in defense issues and working with Admiral Gaffney when he was the chief official in the Navy on ocean research. I can tell you that we did some very exciting things.

As a senior member of the Science Committee that oversees a lot of our agencies and that perspective of non-defense worked on the oceans agenda and as probably the most involved member of Congress with Russia. And I'm going to get to that in a moment, the important work that you can do to help us in that area you already have done a lot of work.

You have an absolutely unbelievable opportunity and that opportunity I think, one, is to move forward for this country in helping us unify around a common agenda that all of us can get behind. And that agenda also can be supported by the broad cross-section of America. I remember very well an oceans conference we put together three or four years ago when we brought over 200 delegates from 35 nations. They were in Washington for three days. Admiral, one of our newest oceanographic researchships, if you remember we had a big event down at the side of that ship one of the evenings you were here.

And on one particular day we had a luncheon address by Speaker Gingrich and a dinner speech by Vice President Gore. And most people would think you can't get more ideologically distant than perhaps Gingrich and Gore. What was amazing is, a number of the delegates from the 35 other countries came up to us and said, you know what Gingrich said at lunch was very similar to what Gore said at dinner. The point is that with the oceans' agenda we are far closer to being together than perhaps on any other environmental agenda.

Now, Sam and I both work environmental issues and I take great pride in calling myself a "Green Republican." I think in fact oceans can help provide a stepping stone for dealing with some of the other more intricate environmental issues by

building coalitions that are naturally inclined to want to work together when we have a common oceans' agenda.

I think the comments of Gingrich and Gore and the fact that our caucus now spans the ideological range of the Congress are an indication to you that we're waiting for ideas. We're waiting for suggestions. And the Congress is willing to work in ways it has not worked before.

We passed the Oceans Partnership Bill which I introduced with Patrick Kennedy back four years ago with Admiral Watkins and the CORE group, and people said that would never become law. How did it become law? Well, we did exactly what I think you suggested over here, we tore down the barriers of the committees. We held hearings in Rhode Island and out in California where we had three committees, three separate committees, all come together with a common agenda of what we could do together in terms of bringing our federal agencies into line in sharing and cooperating on ocean research.

Those hearings laid the foundation for passage of the Oceans Partnership Act, and the Oceans Partnership Program which I would argue has become a very successful way of integrating the activities of the originally nine agencies. There are twelve agencies involved in that partnership program. But we still have the problem of jurisdictional oversight, and that's a valid point. You can come back to us, making recommendations to the Congress and the leadership that perhaps we have to do better. We're having that same problem with homeland security right now. In fact, I'm working on a task force to see ways that we can tear down the jurisdictional boundaries in terms of oversight with homeland defense. We have the same issue with oceans. It is extremely important that we have a common agenda and that we try to get the various subcommittee and committees both on the authorization and appropriation side to understand that it will be easier for us if we have a common unifying effort of oversight. And I think with your help and with your leadership that can be accomplished.

Besides being a unifier at home, I think the most important role you can play abroad is just unlimited. You know, often times those of us who support defense are thought to be anti-environment. And those who are pro-environment, are thought to be anti-defense. I happen to think that environment and defense go hand-in-hand. And I happen to think that using the oceans for security purposes is an absolutely essential way to move ahead in the 21st Century.

I just prepared a document, a 40-page document that I hand delivered to Condoleezza Rice on Thursday that is a new strategy hopefully that Bush and Putin are using as a basis of their discussions today and this week and then when they go back to Moscow in the spring. It's called, "A New Time and a New Beginning." And it says that we must expand our relations with Russia beyond the defense and security issues to a broader agenda. A broader agenda includes 11 major areas of focus: agriculture, culture and education, defense and

security, economic development, energy and natural resources, environmental cooperation, health care, judicial and legal, local government, science and technology, space and aeronautics. Woven throughout these 11 key areas in 110 specific recommendations that we make is example after example of how the oceans can in fact provide the basis for a new relationship with Russia.

Nothing could be more critical to us right now than building upon the efforts taken by President Putin to bring America and Russia together. Now, we have laid the foundation. The Navy has done absolutely outstanding work with the Russian Navy, Admiral Casintonov, I've been up the Mermansk. I've seen the work we've done in terms of helping Russia with their nuclear material, and their nuclear storage and getting Russia — after the Albacov Commission Report — to stop dumping their radioactive particles in the oceans of the world. Those are all successes that we can partially take credit for. The Amec program has been an outstanding example of us working with Russia.

So what happens here is, in a case of a relationship between a country like America and Russia, the oceans again become a unifier. And the same thing can apply to China. I met with the Minister of Environmental Protection, Mr. Shi, in China three times, twice there and once here, and he's excited about us working with China on the oceans. So you can play a role beyond just the oceans' agenda for America in helping us create new multinational and bilateral linkages that can really help us provide more security. Now, in this document, which is broad in scope and I think deep in content, we actually worked with all the nonprofit groups, the academic universities, the think tanks who are doing work in Russia and assembling this. In fact, we have a nine page appendix which lists all the programs in place with Russia today.

When I took this document to Condie Rice on Thursday afternoon at the White House and handed it to her, along with it I had a letter signed by 140 of my colleagues. It could have been signed by 300 but I only had two days to get the letter signed from Wednesday morning until Thursday evening.

It's interesting, on the front page you have such notable figures, three notable figures and me, Dick Lugar, Carl Levin, Joe Biden, all coming together saying, it's time to take a new direction, in this case, with Russia. The ocean agenda is woven throughout this new agenda with Russia. This document is signed by 140 of our colleagues in the House and Senate. And as I said before about being a unifier, it ranges from the extreme left, my good friend Bernie Sanders, our only socialist in Congress, Dennis Kucinich, my good friend who chairs the progressive caucus, international affairs issues, to the far right with arguably the most left portion of Sam's party to people like Sylvetre Reyes, my good friend who chairs the Hispanic caucus, to African-American members of Congress to people like Howard Berman and Ed Markey who work with people like Roscoe Bartlet and Joe Pitts. And in the center people in both parties like Henry Hyde,

Chairman of International Affairs, Dick Arme, J.C. Watts, Chris Cox, and a whole host of other members representing the mainstream of the Congress.

The point that I'm making is, the Congress is ready to move in a new direction. A new direction not just about our relationship with Russia, but I'm convinced a new direction in terms of understanding and working substantively on an oceans agenda.

One of the recommendations in this document — and this was actually briefed, I went over and briefed the Russians in the Kremlin back in August on the basic outline of it — is to basically have the Congress ratify the law of the Sea Convention. Now, that recommendation has been around for a long time. Only a few people have held it up. What we are now saying is that it's time to move on that agenda. That's a major oceans initiative, but it's also a major positive sign to Russia and other nations around the world that we're not going to have two standards, one for us and one for the rest of the world.

There are major items in here about increasing our investment in ocean research in cooperation with an international ocean sensing program, one of your pet projects, Admiral Watkins. So I am excited about the opportunity that you all have. I'm excited about the broad base of support that you bring to the table and the fact that members in both parties, from the most liberal to the most conservatives are saying, this is an agenda that we can rally around.

I also have some other concerns in which I think you can play a significant role. As a 15-year member of the Armed Services Committee and now Chairman of the Procurement Committee, I want to see us reduce the possibility for conflict which leads to the ultimate insertion of American troops into harm's way as we currently see.

Oceans and the environment can be a key player in that process. Because if we can understand what causes regional conflict, which are largely floods and sometimes hurricanes and weather conditions and the El Nino and La Nina effect, and have a 911 program to go in and help mitigate the impact of those extreme environmental conditions, then we can reduce the potential for a regional conflict which reduced the possibility of us having to use our military in a hostile way.

What better use of an oceans and environmental agenda than to help us reduce conflict in the world. Now, there have been some attempts at that. The Media project which some of you are probably familiar with, which was started with the intelligence community's cooperation opened up new sources of heretofore classified technologies that the military had to be used for environmental understanding.

As a strong proponent of the military, I absolutely support that and think you should help us look for additional ways that we can take those technologies and take those areas that up until now have been solely thought of as for military purposes and help us find ways to predict and then prevent conflict from occurring in those nations around the world who may be fighting over water or fighting over food, or fighting over the impact of other environmental conditions to which their people have been subjected.

In addition, countries like Russia are chomping at the bits to work with us in finding new ways to better understand the oceans. I was in Moscow in September and one of my meetings was with [inaudible] Savin who is the leader of the Comiata Institute. He is currently the father of the only joint cooperative program we have with Russia on missile defense. It's called the Ramos project, which the previous administration tried to cancel ironically in 1995 and '96 and which Carl Levin and I went to the wall to restore. That program is now a \$200 million initiative between us and Russia building confidence on what our intentions are in the missile defense arena. Savin gave me a laundry list which I'm going to provide you for the record of at least nine new initiatives between us and Russia all in the area of oceans, all in the area of sensing, all in the area of technology, and all of you as experts probably are far more versed in the implications of that opportunity that we should look at and seek to take advantage of.

I'm convinced the same thing can occur with us in a relationship with China. So I see the agenda of the Commission much broader than just helping us set a domestic agenda for oceans which is critically important, one that we can coordinate with our allies. I see what you're doing as an opportunity to open a new era in our relationship with our would-be adversaries. Those countries that want to work with us, oceans are way that we can get in quickly and have a cooperative effort with our agencies, with our academic institutions, with our research community that in the end I think helps stabilize and bring about a more solid, more comprehensive relationship as friendly countries.

There are five specific points that I would mention to you, and my staff prepared an excellent statement. I don't mean to belittle them, but you know Bruce, he does a great job, Bruce Mulney, who is on loan to me from the Geological Service, he does an outstanding job, and I want to give him a plug here. He's available to assist you in your deliberations along with my own personal staff.

The five key things I would give you that I would want you to focus on specifically are: The use of our military resources. As a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, as the Chairman of the Procurement Committee and former Chairman of both R&D and Readiness, I am prepared to go to the wall to allow you to open up new opportunities. Our military wants to cooperate. The Admiral will tell you that. He has overseen that in the Navy and our Navy is doing an outstanding job and they want to do more. We need to take advantage of that.

Where the military has capabilities, we should be using them for environmental purposes; not just here at home, but also in our relationships abroad.

The Law of the Sea Convention we have to get ratified, and that's got to be a key priority. I've already mentioned it's one of our key recommendations and we are prepared now as Republicans and Democrats to go to the wall to support President Bush in getting that finally approved and to pass legislation providing a comprehensive look at ocean policies and strengthening of programs. The beginning of this was the passage of the Oceans Act of 2000. However, we can't stop there. It needs to continue on. There needs to be an ocean agenda for every new session of Congress. And you need to help us put it in place and process to have that ocean agenda crystallized.

Then we take that ocean agenda and to organizations like ACOPS and GLOBE we transmitted to our partners overseas and we come up with a worldwide policy for the oceans so that we deal with issues ranging from declining fish stocks, the degradation of coral reefs, to the control of sea waves, and it become a common agenda between all the nations that have maritime interests.

Building on what Sam said to implement a formal curriculum for our young people about the importance of the world's oceans. I'm a teacher by profession. I spent a year as an environmental education specialist back when I was teaching in the poor districts in Pennsylvania. Again, one of the key motivators that I use to motivate kids that you would today call "under achievers" was the environment and the oceans. They get excited about oceans. You know that, Bob, with all the work you've done, and so do some of the rest of you. We ought to be taking that and using that as the motivation in our classrooms because it's an exciting way to get kids to want to learn. Kids want to understand the oceans. They don't just want to go down to the beach and swim, they don't just want to go fishing, they don't want to just run. They want to understand what the ocean is all about.

And as Sylvia Earl has said so eloquently so many times, "we have not put the resources in to building that awareness among our young people as we should." And I would hope that this Commission could in fact assist us in making that change occur.

And in addition to these recommendations I would say that Sam and Tom Allan and a whole host of us that are prepared to assist you in terms of awareness, in terms of education, we're looking forward to your agenda and to a real working relationship, not just a one-year report where you come in, but actually a working agenda where you call us in for informal discussions and say, "what's the Congress doing here?" I mean, get us in and work us over. We are advocates on the Hill. We can get to the colleagues that we know will support us, so work us over as you go through your deliberations.

And finally, and Admiral Watkins, you and I have had this discussion over and over again, and this was alluded to by some of the Commissioners already. We've got to change the awareness among the American voter and the American people. And that means we've got to, to some extent, be political. Now, I'm saying we shouldn't be partisan. The worst thing that could happen would be for the Oceans Committee to establish a partisan agenda. Because if this agenda becomes identified with one party or the other, then you will be fine as long as that one party is in power, but when it's out, you're going to pay the price. Oceans need to be a bipartisan agenda. But that doesn't mean we can't be political. That means, as Admiral Watkins has said so frequently to the members of CORE and as I've said to them in their meetings down here time and again, they've got to get their communities involved. They've got to get the professors and the students and those that are affiliated with these institutions to become more engaged with their representatives on the importance of the oceans and an oceans agenda.

Being political means to have them hold us accountable for what we do and to have those activist ocean organizations and companies and nonprofit and academic institutions have a proactive effort to know in every member of Congress who the staffer is assigned to oceans agenda items. I would venture to say, in many cases they don't have any idea who the staff is that we assign to handle oceans issues which is why we don't have the kind of response that we all would want to see in terms of Capitol Hill response. You can help us in that effort. Again, not a partisan effort, but an effort to create a political sensitivity that then results in more American voters and more people across the country responding to the recommendations that you bring forward that we want to react in a positive way on. We've got to take the oceans agenda to the American people.

I think you have an historic opportunity. I think we've laid some ground work. The work that we've done in building coalitions in the Congress, the moving toward the oceans partnership program, the realization that our committee oversight structure is antiquated, the establishment of the oceans caucus, the international networks we've established through groups like GLOBE and ACOPS, all lay the foundation for you. It's all now in your hands. Republicans and Democrats together, liberals and moderates together, we're waiting for you.

You now have the ball in your court and we're looking for good things. So as Admiral Watkins knows, I am a man of action. I am not a man of much BS. I commit to you, I'll follow through. We'll give you the tools you need and the support you need to accomplish the ideas and the suggestions that you bring to us. Together I think we can make a major contribution not just to improve the quality of the oceans. I think we can make a fundamental improvement in changing the nature of our bilateral nations around the world. And that ultimately perhaps will be the most important legacy of what you all do. Thank you.

