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Joint Initiative Lauds Progress on Ocean Funding

December 18, 2015 (Washington, D.C.) — The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative applauds Congress and the Obama Administration’s budget deal, which provides much needed funding for programs necessary to protect our nation’s oceans and coasts. For example, the FY2016 omnibus bill provides an overall increase of approximately \$317 million for NOAA, an additional \$119 million for the National Science Foundation, and over a billion dollar increase for NASA. No budget bill is perfect and while there are many areas to improve upon, the 2016 omnibus offers meaningful support for core programs at NOAA, the National Science Foundation, and NASA that help manage, protect, and better understand our nation’s oceans and coasts and the Arctic.

On December 2, the Joint Initiative [sent a letter](#) to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Commerce, Justice, Science and related Agencies urging them to increase support for numerous ocean initiatives. Amongst others, the letter called for more financial support for coastal resilience, ocean acidification research, ocean exploration, and other ocean science related programs. Furthermore, the Joint Initiative urged the Subcommittee to resist riders that complicate the nation’s ability to coordinate state, regional, and national policies to address urgent coastal and ocean issues.

The omnibus bill reflects many of these priorities. It maintains funding for coastal resiliency grants and increases funding for ocean acidification research by approximately \$2 million. The bill also provides an additional \$4 million for ocean exploration, and maintains funding for IOOS and Sustained Ocean Observation and Monitoring. Additionally, the omnibus includes language from Senator Sheldon Whitehouse’s [National Ocean and Coastal Security Act](#) creating an ocean trust fund. Both the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission advocated for a dedicated source of funding from ocean uses to restore and protect our oceans, and the jobs and coastal economies that depend on them. The version included in the omnibus represents an important step in this direction.

Certainly the omnibus left some things unfinished. The Joint Initiative is disheartened that Congress failed to establish a funding source for the ocean trust fund and that it continued the downward trend in funding for NOAA’s Office of Education. FY 2017 will provide an opportunity to address these and other issues and JOCI looks forward to engaging with members of Congress and the Administration on this important work. For more information on the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and our work, please visit www.jointoceancommission.org or call Laura Cantral at 202-354-6444.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and Pew Oceans Commission. The primary goal of the Joint Initiative is to accelerate the pace of change that results in meaningful ocean policy reform.