

CASTLE SUPPORTS BEACH PROTECTION ACT -- April 17, 2008

Washington, DC -- Congressman Michael N. Castle (R-DE) supported passage of H.R. 2537, the Beach Protection Act, which will help to improve public health and environmental protection for beaches in Delaware and the United States.

The legislation reauthorizes and expands upon the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act, enacted in 2000 to address concerns about the health risks posed by bacteria and other pollutants in the country's coastal recreational waters.

Rep. Castle, a long time supporter of keeping Delaware's beaches clean and safe, was honored by the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) in March 2007 with the "Coastal Advocate Award." Earlier this year, he also voted in favor of the Water Resources Development Act which authorized funding needed to carry out the studies and beach renourishment efforts throughout the country.

"Beach season is fast approaching, and we must ensure that our waters are safe and swimmable," said Rep. Castle. "The Environmental Protection Agency reported that states had significantly improved assessment and monitoring of beaches following the implementation of the BEACH Act. The bill we passed, the Beach Protection Act, will sustain the resources necessary for Delaware to monitor the safety and cleanliness of our beaches."

Specifically, the Beach Protection Act, H.R. 2537 will:

Expand current grant programs to also cover developing and implementing programs for identifying and tracking the source of water pollution in coastal recreational waters;

Currently BEACH Act grants can only be used for monitoring and notification programs.

Increase funding available for the BEACH Act to \$200 million over the next five-years;

Require annual report on occurrence, nature, location, pollutants involved, and extent to which water samples exceeded standards for pathogen/pathogen indicators;

Identify a publicly accessible and searchable database to include public safety information on individual beaches, to be updated within 24 hours of information being provided;

Require immediate posting of signs at beaches or other public access points if water quality samples exceed applicable water quality standards for pathogen/pathogen indicators;

Encourage the use of rapid testing methods in order to alert the public quickly of contaminated water; and

Ensure decisions to close a beach/issue an advisory are made within 24 hours of a state determination that water does not meet water quality standards.

Rep. Castle has also been a strong supporter of National Clean Beaches Week which recognizes the considerable value of American beaches and the need to keep them clean and safe for the public. To learn more about National Clean Beaches Week and how you can participate, visit <http://www.cleanbeaches.org/events/cbw/>.

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