

June 17, 2009

Dear Senator:

We urge you to support S. 878, the Clean Coastal Environment and Public Health Act, introduced by Senators Lautenberg and Voinovich, which will help ensure the safety of U.S. beaches by enhancing the capacity of local beachwater monitoring and public notification programs, authorizing use of funding for identifying and cleaning up sources of pollution, and improving standards for timely public notification of contaminated beachwaters.

Coastal tourism and recreation in the United States is responsible for more than one million jobs and more than \$100 billion in wages annually to local economies. Studies have shown that beaches are America's leading tourist destination. But beachwater is not as clean as it can be, and contaminated beachwater threatens both coastal economies and public health. According to data submitted to EPA by state and local beachwater managers and analyzed by the Natural Resources Defense Council in *Testing the Waters*, there are more than 20,000 beach closing and advisory days every year at ocean, bay, and Great Lakes beaches due to contamination by sewage, polluted stormwater, and other sources of pathogens that can make swimmers sick. Those swimming in contaminated water risk being infected by bacteria, viruses, and parasites that can enter through the mouth, nose, eyes, lungs or cuts on the skin. These pathogens can cause a wide range of diseases including ear, nose and eye infections; gastroenteritis; hepatitis; encephalitis; skin rashes; and respiratory illnesses. Children, the elderly, and those with a weakened immune system are particularly vulnerable.

What S. 878 would do:

- Reauthorize the BEACH Act of 2000 for 5 years
- Increase the amount of funding available to states, so that a greater number of beaches can be monitored and more frequent monitoring can be conducted
- Allow funds to be used for pollution source detection and cleanup to prevent future incidences of closings and advisories
- Direct EPA to approve and states to use four hour rapid test methods for monitoring beachwater pollution with same day results
- Speed up requirements to notify beachgoers immediately after contamination is found
- Ensure that public health authorities notify environmental agencies when contamination is found at the beach
- Establish compliance reviews to ensure that state and local programs receiving federal funds are meeting the minimum requirements of the BEACH Act

We urge you to support the prompt passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely yours,

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Natural Resources Defense Council (DC)

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Clean Water Network (DC)

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