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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Members and Staff
FROM: Science, Space, and Technology Committee Staff
DATE: May 5, 2014
RE: Full Committee Markup

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology will meet on Thursday, May 8th at 10:00 a.m. in Room 2318 of the Rayburn House Office Building to consider the following:

- S. 1254, The Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act of 2013

Background

A harmful algal bloom (HAB) is a bloom, or rapid overproduction of algal cells, that produces toxins, which are detrimental to plants and animals. These outbreaks are commonly referred to as "red" or "brown" tides. Blooms can kill fish and other aquatic life by decreasing sunlight available to the water and by depleting the available oxygen in the water, causing hypoxia. The produced toxins accumulate in shellfish, fish, or through the accumulation of biomass that affect other organisms and alter food webs. In recent years, many of the Nation's coastlines, near shore marine waters, and freshwaters have experienced an increase in the number, frequency, duration, and type of HABs.

Legislative History

In 1998, Congress passed the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act (HABHRCA, Public Law 105-83), which established an Interagency Task Force to develop a national HABs assessment and authorized funding for existing and new research programs on HABs. These programs involve federal, state, and academic partners and support interdisciplinary extramural research studies to address the issues of HABs in an ecosystem context.

In 2004, HABHRCA was reauthorized in Public Law 108-456.The reauthorized Act required assessments of HABs in different coastal regions and in the Great Lakes and included plans to expand research to address the impacts of HABs. The law also authorized research, education, and monitoring activities related to the prevention, reduction, and control of harmful algal blooms and hypoxia. The 2004 HABHRCA authorized funds to conduct research and

reduce HABs and hypoxia in U.S. marine waters, estuaries, and the Great Lakes. In its role as a task force participant, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has signed memorandums of understanding to fund competitive research in these areas.

The reauthorization expired in 2008, however, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-161) provided an authorization of appropriations through FY2010. NOAA continues these activities under existing general authorities.

S. 1254 was reported, without amendment, out of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on July 30, 2013. The bill passed the Senate, with amendment, by Unanimous Consent on February 12, 2014.

Major Provisions of S. 1254

The Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act of 2013 would:

- Streamline and coordinate existing HAB/Hypoxia activities at NOAA and at other Federal agencies, prioritizing:
    - An action strategy to help communities understand, predict, control and mitigate freshwater and marine HAB and hypoxia events
    - Event response and infrastructure programs
- Provides for development of Comprehensive Research and Action Plans to identify regional, state, and local needs in prioritizing research and developing products and tools to aid decision making;
- Promote the transition of research products into implementable actions for regional, State, and local governments to predict, prevent, monitor, and mitigate HAB and hypoxia events and to minimize any resulting economic, ecologic, and human health impacts in their communities; and
- Provide for research and monitoring of freshwater HABs, including the Great Lakes.

Appropriations: The bill authorizes $20.5 million to NOAA from 2014 to 2018. Recent authorizations for NOAA's HABs and Hypoxia programs have been $23.5 million (FY 2005), $24.5 million (FY 2006), $25.0 million (FY 2007), $30.0 million (FY 2008), $30.0 million (FY 2009), and $30.0 million (FY 2010).