

Public Law 116–221  
116th Congress

An Act

To reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes.

Dec. 18, 2020

[S. 910]

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the “National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act of 2020”.

National Sea  
Grant College  
Program  
Amendments Act  
of 2020.  
33 USC 1121  
note.

**SEC. 2. REFERENCES TO THE NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM ACT.**

Except as otherwise expressly provided, wherever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1121 et seq.).

**SEC. 3. MODIFICATION OF DEAN JOHN A. KNAUSS MARINE POLICY FELLOWSHIP.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 208(b) (33 U.S.C. 1127(b)) is amended by striking “may” and inserting “shall”.

(b) **PLACEMENTS IN CONGRESS.**—Such section is further amended—

(1) in the first sentence, by striking “The Secretary” and inserting the following:

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary”; and

(2) in paragraph (1), as designated by paragraph (1), in the second sentence, by striking “A fellowship” and inserting the following:

“(2) **PLACEMENT PRIORITIES.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—In each year in which the Secretary awards a legislative fellowship under this subsection, when considering the placement of fellows, the Secretary shall prioritize placement of fellows in the following:

“(i) Positions in offices of, or with Members on, committees of Congress that have jurisdiction over the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

“(ii) Positions in offices of Members of Congress that have a demonstrated interest in ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes resources.

“(B) **EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.**—In placing fellows in offices described in subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall ensure that placements are equitably distributed among the political parties.

“(3) DURATION.—A fellowship”.

33 USC 1127  
note.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to the first calendar year beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) SENSE OF CONGRESS CONCERNING FEDERAL HIRING OF FORMER FELLOWS.—It is the sense of Congress that in recognition of the competitive nature of the fellowship under section 208(b) of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1127(b)), and of the exceptional qualifications of fellowship awardees, the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, should encourage participating Federal agencies to consider opportunities for fellowship awardees at the conclusion of their fellowships for workforce positions appropriate for their education and experience.

**SEC. 4. MODIFICATION OF AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF COMMERCE TO ACCEPT DONATIONS FOR NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 204(c)(4)(E) (33 U.S.C. 1123(c)(4)(E)) is amended to read as follows:

“(E) accept donations of money and, notwithstanding section 1342 of title 31, United States Code, of voluntary and uncompensated services;”.

33 USC 1123  
note.

(b) PRIORITIES.—The Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, shall establish priorities for the use of donations accepted under section 204(c)(4)(E) of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(c)(4)(E)), and shall consider among those priorities the possibility of expanding the Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship’s placement of additional fellows in relevant legislative offices under section 208(b) of that Act (33 U.S.C. 1127(b)), in accordance with the recommendations under subsection (c) of this section.

Consultation.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the National Sea Grant College Program, in consultation with the National Sea Grant Advisory Board and the Sea Grant Association, shall—

Recommendations.

(1) develop recommendations for the optimal use of any donations accepted under section 204(c)(4)(E) of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(c)(4)(E)); and

(2) submit to Congress a report on the recommendations developed under paragraph (1).

33 USC 1123  
note.

(d) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or otherwise affect any other amounts available for marine policy fellowships under section 208(b) of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1127(b)), including amounts—

(1) accepted under section 204(c)(4)(F) of that Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(c)(4)(F)); or

(2) appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under section 212 of that Act (33 U.S.C. 1131).

**SEC. 5. REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY REQUIRED FOR NATIONAL SEA GRANT ADVISORY BOARD REPORT.**

Section 209(b)(2) (33 U.S.C. 1128(b)(2)) is amended—

(1) in the paragraph heading, by striking “BIENNIAL” and inserting “PERIODIC”;

Notification.

(2) by striking the first sentence and inserting the following: “The Board shall report to Congress at least once every

four years on the state of the national sea grant college program and shall notify Congress of any significant changes to the state of the program not later than two years after the submission of such a report.”; and

(3) in the second sentence, by adding before the end period the following: “and provide a summary of research conducted under the program”.

**SEC. 6. MODIFICATION OF ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM.**

Section 204(b) (33 U.S.C. 1123(b)) is amended, in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by inserting “for research, education, extension, training, technology transfer, and public service” after “financial assistance”.

**SEC. 7. DESIGNATION OF NEW NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGES AND SEA GRANT INSTITUTES.**

Section 207(b) (33 U.S.C. 1126(b)) is amended—

(1) in the subsection heading, by striking “EXISTING DESIGNEES” and inserting “ADDITIONAL DESIGNATIONS”; and

(2) by striking “Any institution” and inserting the following:

“(1) NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS OF DESIGNATIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Not less than 30 days before designating an institution, or an association or alliance of two or more such institutions, as a sea grant college or sea grant institute under subsection (a), the Secretary shall notify Congress in writing of the proposed designation. The notification shall include an evaluation and justification for the designation.

Deadline.

Evaluation.

“(B) EFFECT OF JOINT RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL.—

The Secretary may not designate an institution, or an association or alliance of two or more such institutions, as a sea grant college or sea grant institute under subsection (a) if, before the end of the 30-day period described in subparagraph (A), a joint resolution disapproving the designation is enacted.

“(2) EXISTING DESIGNEES.—Any institution”.

**SEC. 8. DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY; DEAN JOHN A. KNAUSS MARINE POLICY FELLOWSHIP.**

33 USC 1127 note.

(a) IN GENERAL.—During fiscal year 2021 and any fiscal year thereafter, the head of any Federal agency may appoint, without regard to the provisions of subchapter I of chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, other than sections 3303 and 3328 of that title, a qualified candidate described in subsection (b) directly to a position with the Federal agency for which the candidate meets Office of Personnel Management qualification standards.

(b) DEAN JOHN A. KNAUSS MARINE POLICY FELLOWSHIP.—Subsection (a) applies with respect to a former recipient of a Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship under section 208(b) of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1127(b)) who—

Applicability.

(1) earned a graduate or post-graduate degree in a field related to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources or policy from an accredited institution of higher education; and

(2) successfully fulfilled the requirements of the fellowship within the executive or legislative branch of the United States Government.

Deadline.

(c) **LIMITATION.**—The direct hire authority under this section shall be exercised with respect to a specific qualified candidate not later than 2 years after the date that the candidate completed the fellowship described in subsection (b).

**SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 212(a) (33 U.S.C. 1131(a)) is amended—

(1) by amending paragraph (1) to read as follows:

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this title—

“(A) \$87,520,000 for fiscal year 2021;

“(B) \$91,900,000 for fiscal year 2022;

“(C) \$96,500,000 for fiscal year 2023;

“(D) \$101,325,000 for fiscal year 2024; and

“(E) \$105,700,000 for fiscal year 2025.”; and

(2) by amending paragraph (2) to read as follows:

“(2) **PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR FISCAL YEARS 2021 THROUGH 2025.**—In addition to the amounts authorized to be appropriated under paragraph (1), there are authorized to be appropriated \$6,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2021 through 2025 for competitive grants for the following:

“(A) University research on the biology, prevention, and control of aquatic nonnative species.

“(B) University research on oyster diseases, oyster restoration, and oyster-related human health risks.

“(C) University research on the biology, prevention, and forecasting of harmful algal blooms.

“(D) University research, education, training, and extension services and activities focused on coastal resilience and United States working waterfronts and other regional or national priority issues identified in the strategic plan under section 204(c)(1).

“(E) University research and extension on sustainable aquaculture techniques and technologies.

“(F) Fishery research and extension activities conducted by sea grant colleges or sea grant institutes to enhance, and not supplant, existing core program funding.”.

(b) **MODIFICATION OF LIMITATIONS ON AMOUNTS FOR ADMINISTRATION.**—Paragraph (1) of section 212(b) (33 U.S.C. 1131(b)) is amended to read as follows:

“(1) **ADMINISTRATION.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—There may not be used for administration of programs under this title in a fiscal year more than 5.5 percent of the lesser of—

“(i) the amount authorized to be appropriated under this title for the fiscal year; or

“(ii) the amount appropriated under this title for the fiscal year.

“(B) **CRITICAL STAFFING REQUIREMENTS.**—

“(i) **IN GENERAL.**—The Director shall use the authority under subchapter VI of chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, and under section 210 of this title, to meet any critical staffing requirement while carrying out the activities authorized under this title.

“(ii) EXCEPTION FROM CAP.—For purposes of subparagraph (A), any costs incurred as a result of an exercise of authority as described in clause (i) shall not be considered an amount used for administration of programs under this title in a fiscal year.”.

(c) ALLOCATION OF FUNDING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 204(d)(3) (33 U.S.C. 1123(d)(3)) is amended—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking “With respect to sea grant colleges and sea grant institutes” and inserting “With respect to sea grant colleges, sea grant institutes, sea grant programs, and sea grant projects”; and

(B) in subparagraph (B), in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking “funding among sea grant colleges and sea grant institutes” and inserting “funding among sea grant colleges, sea grant institutes, sea grant programs, and sea grant projects”.

(2) REPEAL OF REQUIREMENTS CONCERNING DISTRIBUTION OF EXCESS AMOUNTS.—Section 212 (33 U.S.C. 1131) is amended—

(A) by striking subsection (c); and

(B) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as subsections (c) and (d), respectively.

**SEC. 10. REPEAL OF REQUIREMENT FOR REPORT ON COORDINATION OF OCEANS AND COASTAL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.**

Section 9 of the National Sea Grant College Program Act Amendments of 2002 (33 U.S.C. 857–20) is repealed.

**SEC. 11. TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.**

The National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1121 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in section 204(d)(3)(B) (33 U.S.C. 1123(d)(3)(B)), by moving clause (vi) 2 ems to the right; and

(2) in section 209(b)(2) (33 U.S.C. 1128(b)(2)), as amended by section 5, in the third sentence, by striking “The Secretary shall” and inserting the following:

“(3) AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES OF DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.—The Secretary shall”.

Approved December 18, 2020.

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LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S. 910 (H.R. 2405):

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 116-323 (Comm. on Natural Resources) accompanying H.R. 2405.

SENATE REPORTS: No. 116-216 (Comm. on Commerce, Science, and Transportation).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 166 (2020):

Sept. 30, considered and passed Senate.

Nov. 16, considered and passed House, amended.

Dec. 2, Senate concurred in House amendment.

