



MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

S.2001 (May) / A.1700 (Buttenschon)

AN ACT to amend the canal law, in relation to the general powers and duties of the canal corporation

The Capital Region Chamber, representing 2,600 businesses and organizations from throughout the Capital Region that employ more than 150,000 area residents, supports S.2001/A.1700, which would amend the canal law, in relation to the general powers and duties of the canal corporation.

Specifically, this legislation would expand the use of state drydock facilities for commercial vessels such as tour boats to include Coast Guard drydock inspections and winter storage, and formally adopts in statute a Canal System navigation season that supports optimum use of the Erie Canal.

This legislation would ensure that the canal operating season is of sufficient length to best serve the thousands of local and transient vessels which ply its waters every year. The bill would keep canal structures intact and ensure that state-owned land and assets are used for the benefit of local business as well as the economically challenged canal communities. These are very significant goals, especially given the transportation and infrastructure changes that will be necessary to guide New York State's economy in the decades ahead in a post-COVID world and informed by global supply chain considerations.

The Chamber is a proud sponsor of America's Great Loop and we interact with transient boaters on a regular basis. Businesses associated with the Chamber have delivered the first non-fossil-fuel cargo in Erie Canal history, become the first-ever USCG-certified solar electric tour vessels, and have used conventionally powered tugs and barges to move major cargoes on these waters. In the past year alone, we have had five expressions of interest by marine cargo entities and have been unable to act on them due to the constraints of the current constraints and the COVID-19 crisis. Rather than lessen the usefulness of the 524-mile New York State Canal System, now is the time to preserve all possible marine transportation options to prepare for the needs of tomorrow. The Erie Canal is about to turn 200 years old. With proper planning, its third century may turn out to be its most significant.

For these stated reasons, the Capital Region Chamber recommends the passage of this legislation.

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