

Sustain leadership on international ocean issues

The problems facing America's oceans are global in their severity and scope and, thus, require global solutions. The United States has the world's largest Exclusive Economic Zone, one that touches the Arctic, Pacific, and Atlantic Oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean; the world's largest navy; and the strongest marine science enterprise. As a result, the United States is uniquely positioned to lead the world on ocean issues, thereby strengthening our economy and national security. The United States has been a global leader on oceans, for example, by serving as Chair of the [Arctic Council](#), promoting innovative solutions to international fishing issues, and convening the first [Our Ocean Conference](#) in 2014, as well as the third conference in 2016, which brought unprecedented attention to ocean issues and increased global commitments to responsible ocean management. Yet, there remain opportunities for improvement. For example, U.S. diplomats have not included ocean and marine issues in international climate discussions and negotiations despite their fundamental role in the global climate system. Nor has the U.S. Senate ratified the Convention on the Law of the Sea, an essential treaty on global ocean governance. As we confront a changing ocean, increased international coordination and collaboration is vital to the U.S. national interest.

Continue to demonstrate strong leadership by highlighting ocean issues in international forums

In recent years, the nations of the world made significant progress on marine debris, ocean conservation, and sustainable fisheries, in large part due to U.S. leadership. The [Our Ocean Conference](#) was first convened by the United States in 2014, by Chile in 2015, and by the United States again in 2016. The European Union, Indonesia, and Norway have committed to hosting the next three conferences, respectively. These conferences bring together senior leaders of governments, the private sector, NGOs, and philanthropic organizations to commit to action on pressing ocean and coastal issues. The previous three conferences have resulted in almost \$10 billion in financial commitments to address ocean issues, including support for international actions to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and protect ecologically significant areas. This is an important arena where U.S. leadership is spurring other countries to invest in the future of the world's oceans. For this reason, **the United States should continue to support, participate in, and host international dialogues regarding actions that benefit the nation and result in measurable progress on our most pressing global ocean issues.**

Our planet's climate is undergoing massive changes that are impacting people around the world. The ocean, which covers 71 percent of the planet's surface, is experiencing rapid and potentially devastating change. It has absorbed half of all fossil-based carbon released into the atmosphere since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The consequences of this include ocean acidification, sea level rise, species migration, and other measurable impacts. For this reason, **the United States should prioritize inclusion of ocean issues in future international climate discussions.**

Provide advice and consent to the Convention on the Law of the Sea

[The Convention on the Law of the Sea](#) is a comprehensive international accord to which 155 nations and the European Union belong. It establishes overarching common sense rules about the world's oceans and resources, including the Arctic. As the only industrialized nation not party to the Convention, the United States remains sidelined in ongoing dialogues about access to and management of Arctic resources, and limited in its ability to address escalating tensions in the South China Sea. By participating in the Convention, the United States would secure sovereign rights over extensive marine areas, promote international commerce, protect America's national security interests, and further the conservation of ocean resources. A broad, diverse, and bipartisan range of interests overwhelmingly supports U.S. accession to the Convention. All major U.S. ocean industries, including offshore energy, maritime transportation and commerce, fishing, and shipbuilding support accession, as does the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Environmental, research, and faith-based organizations also strongly support the Convention. **The U.S. Senate should ratify the Convention on the Law of the Sea as soon as possible in the new Congress.**