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## Joint Ocean Commission Initiative Applauds Massachusetts Legislators for Passing Ocean Act

### *Groundbreaking Legislation Will Coordinate Ocean Management Policies and Protect Coastal Waters*

May 29, 2008 (Washington, D.C.) – The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative applauds Massachusetts state legislators for passing the nation’s first comprehensive ocean management plan. The Massachusetts Ocean Act is now the only piece of statewide legislation to prioritize the protection of ocean resources by requiring state leaders to coordinate a plan for coastline management.

“Policymakers in the Bay State have truly set the precedent for ocean management,” said the Honorable Leon E. Panetta, co-chair of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative. “Today, there are hundreds of competing uses for coastal areas, from transportation to energy to fishing to recreation. For the first time, this legislation provides for a comprehensive approach to managing these uses to protect coastal waters for generations to come. It is truly landmark legislation for the nation.”

The Massachusetts Ocean Act coordinates many ocean-related policies and activities that had previously been managed individually, a process which had led to inefficiency. The legislation also connects the state government with the private sector by establishing a 17-person commission of state agency officials, legislators and advocates who will manage this critical undertaking. In addition, the Act instills a strict timeline, calling on state legislators to complete a draft of the ocean management plan by the summer of 2009, and requires state leaders to fully approve the plan by December of 2009.

“Ocean management policies in Massachusetts, like in many coastal states, had been shockingly disconnected,” said Admiral James D. Watkins, (U.S. Navy, Ret.) co-chair of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative. “Because of the determination of state leaders, however, the Oceans Act coordinates these policies in a way no state or even the federal government has done before.”

The Oceans Act requires comprehensive and science-based planning of the state’s coastline. The Bay State historically has considered its shores to be the foundation of much of its industry and culture. The Act ensures that state leaders place ocean issues at the top of the priority list, working toward long-term protection and sustainable use of a resource so many residents of Massachusetts treasure.

The Joint Initiative encourages political leaders in Massachusetts to work with the Massachusetts Ocean Partnership, a coalition of interest groups across the state from government representatives to environmental organizations, to help develop the ocean plan. The federal government can also assist

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the state in these important efforts by increasing its investment in a national policy for coordinated management of our oceans and marine resources.

For more information on the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and its work, please visit [www.jointoceancommission.org](http://www.jointoceancommission.org).

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*The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and Pew Oceans Commission to catalyze ocean policy reform. The Joint Initiative is guided by a ten-member task force, five from each commission, and led by Admiral James D. Watkins (U.S. Navy, Ret.) and the Honorable Leon E. Panetta, chairs of the U.S. Commission and Pew Commission, respectively. The primary goal of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is to accelerate the pace of change that results in meaningful ocean policy reform.*