



August 3, 2010

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller, IV  
Chairman, Committee on Commerce,  
Science, and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6125

Dear Mr. Chairman:

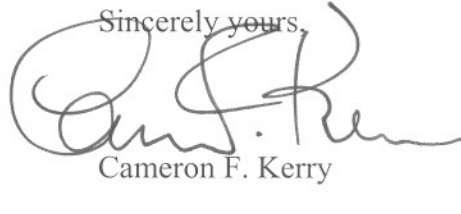
The Department of Commerce strongly supports enactment of the Administration's proposed legislation to implement the International Agreement on Titanic. RMS *Titanic* is perhaps the most famous shipwreck of all time. Its tragic sinking on April 15, 1912, resulted in the development of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea and the establishment of the International Maritime Organization. The location of the RMS *Titanic*, discovered by Dr. Robert Ballard on September 1, 1985, prompted Congress to enact the "RMS Titanic Maritime Memorial Act of 1986." The Act called for the Department of State to negotiate an international agreement to protect RMS *Titanic*, and to recommend to Congress legislation to implement any such agreement. In 2003, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Canada successfully concluded negotiation of an agreement to protect the shipwreck. The United States signed the agreement in 2004, subject to acceptance following the enactment of implementing legislation.

The Department of State transmitted proposed implementing legislation to Congress in June 2009 as part of its FY 2010-FY 2011 authorization bill package. The legislation would designate the RMS *Titanic* wreck site as an international maritime memorial to the many who lost their lives, and would put in place several other valuable measures to protect the scientific, cultural, and historical significance of the wreck.

The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is one of the principal federal agencies responsible for promoting the Nation's stewardship, protection, and scientific understanding of our ocean environment and its resources. NOAA's Maritime Heritage Program focuses on submerged historical, cultural and archeological resources within the Nation's National Marine Sanctuaries, and also promotes maritime heritage appreciation throughout the country. It was NOAA's experience in protecting and managing the Civil War ironclad U.S.S. Monitor after its discovery in 1973 that led Congress to identify NOAA as the lead agency for developing international guidelines for the research, exploration, and salvage of RMS *Titanic*. It is appropriate that the Department of Commerce's responsibilities

identified in the proposed implementing legislation include helping ensure protection of this iconic shipwreck. I urge favorable action on the proposed legislation during this session of Congress, so that the international agreement can be in place as we approach April 15, 2012, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking of RMS *Titanic*.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised the enactment of this legislation would be in accord with the program of the President. If you have any further questions, please contact me or April Boyd, Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at 202-482-3663.

Sincerely yours,  
  
Cameron F. Kerry

cc: The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison  
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce,  
Science and Transportation

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Communications,  
Technology and the Internet

The Honorable John Ensign  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Communications,  
Technology, and the Internet