GREAT LAKES MAPPING ACT OF 2024

Background:
The Great Lakes Region provides over $6T to America's GDP, supports 51 million jobs, and is a critical shipping lifeline for much of the country with more than 200 million tons of cargo shipped through the Great Lakes. Despite the far-reaching economic, social, and environmental significance of the Great Lakes, we lack a thorough understanding of their underwater environment.

The Great Lakes have **never** been fully explored. Thousands of shipwrecks lay hidden in the depths. Ancient civilizations have left their cultural imprint hundreds of feet below the surface. Marine life is crucial for Great Lakes fisheries; however, their habitats are barely understood. Ships sail the fresh waters of the lakes, but unknown dangers lurk below.

Nationally, tens of millions of dollars are being allocated for ocean-related initiatives, but the Great Lakes remain a low priority and as a result, are underfunded and undervalued. It's time to take exploration and discovery of the underwater environment of the Great Lakes into our own hands.

Without intentional and comprehensive exploration, the discovery of hidden resources, shipwrecks, ancient artifacts, and marine habitats may not be possible. Investment and support can change this. Approximately $200 million for bathymetric mapping will enable exploration, yield discoveries, and enrich Great Lakes knowledge.

Bill Summary: This bill would direct the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to conduct high-resolution bathymetric mapping of the lakebeds of the Great Lakes and authorize $200M in appropriations. Throughout this process, NOAA would work with consulting bodies and regional coastal observing systems, such as the Great Lakes Observing System to map the lakebeds and then make all relevant data available to the public.

Supporting Stakeholders: Great Lakes Observing System