



# save our seas

Building on the bipartisan success of the *Save Our Seas Act*, which was enacted in October 2018, Senators Sullivan and Whitehouse are partnering once again to continue work on eliminating plastic waste in our oceans. Joined by new bipartisan partners, including SFRC Ranking Member Menendez, *Save Our Seas 2.0 Act* pushes us further towards this goal through increased investments in domestic infrastructure, additional support for marine debris programs, and enhanced U.S.-international engagement.

## THE PROBLEM

Dr. Jenna Jambeck caught the world's attention in 2015 when she estimated that over 8 million metric tons of plastic waste, or five grocery bags of plastic for each foot of the world's shoreline, enter the oceans each year. Ninety percent of the plastic entering the oceans via rivers come from just ten rivers, eight of which are in Asia. A report released in 2016 by the World Economic Forum found that without change, there will be more plastic by weight than fish in the oceans by 2050.

When plastics enter the ocean, they do not go away. Instead they break down into smaller and smaller pieces. These microplastics are not only being identified in our food and water, but plastic pollution also affects the wildlife and the economies all along our 12,000 miles of coastline.

## THE SOLUTIONS

In short, marine plastic waste is a human-created problem that demands creative and comprehensive solutions. But it is a solvable challenge. In order to craft this bill, our bipartisan team considered hundreds of comments, edits, and other feedback from government agencies, industry, and nongovernmental organizations. The result of this collaborative process is the *Save Our Seas 2.0 Act*, which builds on the principles outlined in the original *Save Our Seas Act*. It makes progress towards the goals of reducing the creation of plastic waste, finds uses for the plastic waste that already exists to keep it from entering the oceans, spurs innovation, and tackles the problem on a global scale.

## THE BILL

The solutions included in the bill touch on multiple committee jurisdictions in the Senate. As such, in addition to the complete *Save Our Seas 2.0 Act* to be introduced in June 2019, each title will also be introduced as a standalone bill so that the Senate Commerce, Foreign Relations, and Environment and Public Works Committees may give meaningful consideration to the issue of marine debris.

### 1 Enhancing the Domestic Marine Debris Response (CST)

- **Establish a Marine Debris Response Trust Fund** to provide resources to respond to marine debris events.
- **Authorize a new Genius Prize** for Save Our Seas Innovation to support advancements in packaging, materials, detection, cleanup, and other designs.
- **Create a Marine Debris Foundation** to support NOAA's marine debris efforts and for other purposes.
- **Conduct new studies** to improve understanding and create or expand programs to address marine debris.

### 2 Enhanced Global Engagement to Combat Marine Debris (SFRC)

- **Formalize U.S. policy** on international cooperation to combat marine debris.
- **Enhance international outreach** of two of the agencies involved in marine debris activities, NOAA and EPA.
- **Direct the executive branch to maintain international leadership** on marine debris and provide enhanced support for plastic waste mitigation.
- Explore the potential for pursuing a **new international agreement on marine debris** and directs the executive branch to consider marine debris in future agreements.

### 3 Improving Domestic Infrastructure to Prevent Marine Debris (EPW)

- **Invest in improved domestic waste infrastructure** through grants and a new state revolving loan fund.
- **Assess barriers** to improving recycling and repurposing of plastic waste.
- **Improve understanding of the plastic waste issue** through studies that look at human health and explore innovative ways to recycle and reuse plastic waste.
- **Provide grants** to improve water infrastructure to better deal with this pollution.

