

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Congressman Tom Rooney (R-Fla.) yesterday joined as an original cosponsor of the Water Assistance from International Vessels for Emergency Response (WAIVER) Act, which would temporarily waive the Jones Act and allow foreign vessels to help respond to the Gulf Oil spill.

“We need all hands on deck to stop the spill and clean up the mess,” Rooney said. “Unfortunately, the Obama Administration’s refusal to waive the Jones Act has allowed red tape and bureaucratic barriers to stand in the way of those who want to help.

“If the Administration will not waive the Jones Act on its own, I hope that Congress will pass the WAIVER Act and send a message to our friends around the world that we need and want their help.”

The Jones Act prohibits foreign vessels from transporting goods between U.S. ports. Under the Jones Act, the foreign skimmers are prohibited from skimming within three miles of the U.S. coast.

According to a report released by the U.S. Department of State as of June 14, the U.S. had received offers of assistance from 17 governments. As of June 18, the Coast Guard has only accepted the assistance of 15 foreign skimmers.

In 2005, President Bush waived the Jones Act three days after Hurricane Katrina so that foreign-flagged ships could help with disaster relief efforts. That waiver eased the transportation of fuel in the aftermath of the hurricanes.

###