

(3) The refuge is unique in consisting solely of bay bottom and adjacent shoreline up to the mean high-tide mark. Ninety percent of New York's commercial oyster harvest comes from the refuge. Visitors enjoy fishing, wildlife observation, photography and environmental education. The refuge is truly a national treasure.

(4) Many visitors are unaware that were it not for the tireless work and advocacy of then-freshman Congressman Lester Wolff, this area would today be an 8.5-mile causeway and bridge across Long Island Sound between Oyster Bay and Rye, New York, connecting Nassau and Westchester Counties.

(5) The bridge was first proposed by Robert Moses, the well-known New York City Planner, to divert traffic from New York City. Former Governor Nelson Rockefeller signed into law legislation creating the bridge authorized by the New York State Legislature in 1967.

(6) Congressman Wolff, elected in 1964, quickly decided the bridge would be an intrusion in a pristine area, and that Long Island Sound was a very precious resource that was despoiled. The conservation threats in the mid-1960s were suburban development, wetland filling, and industrial pollution. The fight to preserve this land became an enormous political fight and is considered to be a turning point in New York State's environmental legacy.

(7) With State and local political and community leaders, and especially the North Shore leaders and the Committee to Save the Long Island Sound, Congressman Wolff arranged a meeting with Department of the Interior representatives and local leaders where the idea of creating a wildlife refuge from municipal and privately owned wetlands was created.

(8) The Town of Oyster Bay, in which one end of the bridge was to be located, deeded 5,000 acres of wetlands to the United States to be maintained as a Federal wildlife preserve. It was stipulated that if the Department of the Interior agreed to an intrusion of the property, it would revert to the town. Creating a Federal wildlife preserve provided the land with Federal protection.

(9) Because of the vision, dedication, and perseverance of Congressman Lester Wolff, all of us and future generations can enjoy the beauty and magnificence of this refuge.

SEC. 2. RENAMING THE OYSTER BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AS THE CONGRESSMAN LESTER WOLFF OYSTER BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.

(a) **RENAMING.**—The unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System known as the Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge and located near Oyster Bay, New York, shall be known as the "Congressman Lester Wolff Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge".

(b) **REFERENCES.**—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System known as the Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge is deemed to be a reference to the "Congressman Lester Wolff Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the measure under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would rename the Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge in New York as the Congressman Lester Wolff Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

A long-time Congressman from Long Island, Congressman Wolff was instrumental in creating this refuge and protecting it from unnecessary development. Thanks to his hard work and vision, the Oyster Bay refuge is an important stopover for wintering waterfowl, and it is also a popular destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

At 100 years old, Congressman Wolff is the oldest living Member of Congress. This bill is a fitting tribute to him for his years of conservation leadership, and I urge its adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as my friend said, this bill renames the Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge in honor of Congressman Lester Wolff, former Long Island-North Shore Congressman.

It is certainly appropriate to recognize and honor Congressman Wolff's distinguished eight-term career representing the people of New York by adding his name to the wildlife refuge that he fought so hard to create.

This refuge has become a popular destination for many Americans to enjoy the wildlife and beauty of our outdoor spaces, and, at 100 years of age, Congressman Wolff has the distinction of being the oldest living former Member of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, it is most fitting we honor a man so dedicated and who has put so much of his life into fighting to protect and conserve this place and fighting for his constituency. I urge adoption of the measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. SUOZZI), who is the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. SUOZZI. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. HUFFMAN for allowing me this time.

I rise today in support of this bill that I have sponsored, a bipartisan bill, H.R. 263, which, as has been mentioned, would rename the Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge as the Congressman Lester Wolff Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman GRIJALVA. I want to thank, again, Congressman HUFFMAN and my colleagues on the Natural Resources Committee for their work on this bill, as well as the members of the New York delegation, all of whom are cosponsors of and support this legislation.

Congressman Lester Wolff, who represented my district for 16 years, is our Nation's oldest living former Congressman, and, in January, he will turn 101 years old.

The renaming of the Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge in his honor is in recognition of his monumental contributions to the preservation and protection of our environment.

These precious wetlands, at Congressman Lester Wolff's urging, were protected in 1968. It was in 1967 that the New York State Legislature, at the insistence of then-Governor Nelson Rockefeller and the master planner, Robert Moses, authorized a bridge across the Long Island Sound.

Lester immediately saw the bridge would despoil this pristine and precious resource of the Long Island Sound and soon found himself at the center of an enormous political fight. Lester eventually won this fight, and the Oyster Bay Wildlife Refuge was born. Today, it covers over 3,200 acres of one of the most important areas for natural refuge anywhere on the north shore of Long Island and is home to many endangered species.

Not only was Lester a champion for our environment, he also served our Nation honorably in our military. Lester served in the Civil Air Patrol during World War II and commanded the Congressional Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, rising to the rank of colonel.

In 2014, Wolff received the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to also support this legislation so we may honor this great Congressman whose efforts were an important part of our Nation's environmental history.

□ 1400

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I ask for adoption of the measure, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I will close by commanding Representative SUOZZI for his bipartisan initiative to honor the legacy of Congressman Lester Wolff. I urge a "yes" vote on this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 263.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SHARK FIN SALES ELIMINATION ACT OF 2019

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 737) to prohibit the sale of shark fins, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.
The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 737

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act of 2019”.

SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON SALE OF SHARK FINS.

(a) PROHIBITION.—Except as provided in sections 3 and 4, no person shall possess, offer for sale, sell, or purchase any shark fin or product containing any shark fin.

(b) PENALTY.—For purposes of section 308(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1858(a)), a violation of this section shall be treated as an act prohibited by section 307 of that Act.

SEC. 3. EXEMPTION FOR TRADITIONAL FISHERIES, EDUCATION, AND SCIENCE.

Section 2 shall not apply with respect to possession of a shark fin that was taken lawfully under a State, territorial, or Federal license or permit to take or land sharks, if the shark fin is separated from the shark in a manner consistent with the license or permit and is—

- (1) destroyed or discarded upon separation;
- (2) used for noncommercial subsistence purposes in accordance with State or territorial law;

(3) used solely for display or research purposes by a museum, college, or university, or by any other person under a State or Federal permit to conduct noncommercial scientific research; or

(4) retained by the license or permit holder for a noncommercial purpose.

SEC. 4. EXEMPTION FOR DOGFISH.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be a violation of section 2 for any person to possess, offer for sale, sell, or purchase any fresh or frozen raw fin or tail from any stock of the species *Mustelus canis* (smooth dogfish) or *Squalus acanthias* (spiny dogfish).

(b) REPORT.—By not later than January 1, 2027, the Secretary of Commerce should review the exemption in subsection (a) and should prepare and submit to the Congress a report that includes a recommendation on whether the exemption should continue or be terminated. In preparing such report and making such recommendation, the Secretary should analyze factors including—

(1) the economic viability of dogfish fisheries with and without the continuation of the exemption;

(2) the impact to ocean ecosystems of continuing or terminating the exemption;

(3) the impact on enforcement of the ban contained in section 3 caused by the exemption; and

(4) the impact of the exemption on shark conservation.

SEC. 5. INCLUSION OF RAYS AND SKATES IN SEA FOOD TRACEABILITY PROGRAM.

Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Commerce shall revise section 300.324 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, to include rays and skates in the species and species groups specified in subsection (a)(2) of such section.

SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) SHARK.—The term “shark” means any species of the orders *Pristiophoriformes*, *Squatinae*, *Squaliformes*, *Hexanchiformes*, *Lamniformes*, *Carcharhiniformes*, *Orectolobiformes*, and *Heterodontiformes*.

(2) SHARK FIN.—The term “shark fin” means the raw, dried, or otherwise processed detached fin, or the raw, dried, or otherwise processed detached tail, of a shark.

SEC. 7. STATE AUTHORITY.

Nothing in this Act affects any right of a State or territory of the United States to adopt or enforce any regulation or standard that is more stringent than a regulation or standard in effect under this Act.

SEC. 8. DETERMINATION OF BUDGET EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) each will control 20 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the measure under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would make it legal to possess, buy, or sell shark fins in the United States.

Now, everyone knows sharks are in trouble. Around the globe, one-quarter of sharks and their relatives are threatened with extinction. They are being caught and killed on average 30 percent faster than they can reproduce, in large part due to the demand for their fins to fuel the global shark fin trade. The fins from as many as 73 million sharks enter the shark fin trade every single year.

As top predators in the oceans, they play a critical role in ecosystems impacting our fisheries, coral reefs, and tourism economies. The concern for declining shark populations and the impact of their loss and the impact that loss has on ecosystems and tourism alike has led to increased efforts to conserve sharks globally, including no-take marine reserves, species-specific fishing bans, and shark fin trade bans.

While the United States has banned the practice of shark finning, we have not banned the buying and selling of shark fins, which means that we are still a part of the problem.

States and the private sector are catching on. Already 12 States, three territories, 40 airlines, and 20 major international shipping companies and other corporations such as Amazon, Disney, Hilton, and Grubhub have all refused to partake in this trade that devastates shark populations around the world.

And just this year Canada passed a similar bill, in large part thanks to our efforts here. That is the intention of this bill. When the United States steps up to lead, others will follow.

H.R. 737 would build on the leadership of these States, territories, and companies by eliminating shark fin sales and possession in the United States.

In addition to its 287 bipartisan co-sponsors, this bill enjoys the support of recreational fishing interests, aquariums, over 150 scientists, 150 chefs, over 300 dive businesses and over 130 nonprofits. With this overwhelming support and at a time when so many shark populations are depleted, it is of utmost importance that we pass this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Congressman SABLAR for his leadership and also Congressman McCaul for his leadership on this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is a bumper sticker bill that purports to save the sharks, but in reality would damage shark fisheries, destroy American jobs, and increase the threats to endangered species.

Let's first define what we agree on. Killing a shark solely to take its fins is contemptible. It is immoral. Herman Melville called such wanton waste blasphemous.

But let us be clear: This practice is already illegal under Federal law. It has been that way since 1993. American fishermen are not the villains in this story, they are the heroes who are adhering to rigorous regulations that require them to account for the full use of their catches.

So what does this bill do? It does exactly what it purports to abhor. Proponents rightly denounce taking the fins and then throwing away the carcass, so they have come up with a bill that would take the carcass but throw away the fins. This bill makes it illegal to possess or purchase a shark fin. The fins are 50 percent of the value of the catch.

If you force shark fishermen to waste literally 50 percent of the value of their catch, you remove their margin and destroy their enterprise. And this does little to stop the illegal trade of shark fins, since almost all of the demand is in east and Southeast Asia, and that market will simply apply upward pressure on the illegal taking of shark fins.

The responsible management of our U.S. fisheries and the exemplary conduct of U.S. fishermen has resulted in a great success story. Since 2000, the domestic shark population has been growing. The index of shark abundance in 2015 was the highest in its 29-year history.

Now, if you force fishermen to throw away 50 percent of the value of each shark they catch, one of two things are going to happen. To stay in business, they will have to take more and more sharks to make up for their loss, or more likely for American fishermen, they will simply go out of business.

If it is the latter, we can expect an out-of-control explosion in shark populations with devastating consequences for endangered marine species, like the right whale. And in either case, American fishermen will suffer to the advantage of the unregulated illegal foreign fishing fleets.

This is an example of two developments that we have had to watch on the Natural Resources Committee since the Democrats took control.

The first is their tendency to cater to emotional pressure groups who have been successful at raising large sums of money by tugging at the heartstrings of gullible donors, but whose bromides end up doing enormous harm to the very populations they purport to protect. Indeed, the Wildlife Conservation Society recently submitted a letter warning of this signed by 60 of our Nation's leading scientific experts in shark science and fisheries.

The second is the tendency to blame Americans first for the excesses and predations of bad foreign actors.

Time and again, American fishermen, American growers, and American consumers have proven to be the law-abiding, conservation-minded, responsible practitioners of a sustainable practice. But the Democrats continue to impose punitive and destructive measures on them to atone for the irresponsible actions of foreign nations.

Mr. Speaker, I urge rejection of the measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would just note, that in California, where I authored a very similar ban on the possession, sale, and trade of shark fins, the sky has not fallen, the world has not ended. All of the calamities that my friend just predicted have not taken place, and guess what, there continues to be a sustainable shark fishery for the meat without contributing to the global shark fin trade that is driving the decimation of shark populations around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from The Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAN), the author of this bill.

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my bill, H.R. 737, the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act.

The act bans the buying and selling of shark fins in the United States, and this widely supported bipartisan bill has gathered 287 cosponsors. A companion bill, S. 877, has been introduced in the Senate as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is the largest number of cosponsors for any ocean conservation bill so far in this Congress, and I want to thank my good friend and the distinguished Member from Texas, the Honorable MICHAEL McCaul who has worked tirelessly with me on the bill and brings with him the support of 68 Members from his side of the aisle.

This bill has such strong support because it represents an effective way to remove the United States from the dev-

astating global trade in shark fins at zero cost, and because it does so without stopping those who want to fish for sharks and use them for their meat.

Mr. Speaker, sharks are absolutely critical to life in the ocean. As apex predators, they help maintain balance by keeping prey populations in check. They are also critical to the tourism economy off our coastal communities.

In Florida alone, tourists who go diving to see sharks generate more than 200 times the value of the trade in shark fins for our entire country, 200 times the value.

Despite their importance ecologically and economically, sharks are in serious trouble. Each year fins from up to 73 million sharks are sliced off and sold in a global marketplace. And largely due to this demand for fins, some shark species in the population have now declined by more than 90 percent.

Our Nation has wisely banned the inhumane practice of finning sharks and throwing them back into the ocean to drown and die, yet we still allow fins to be bought and sold here. And many of the fins we are buying and selling come from countries that simply do not have the same level of protection the United States gives sharks.

Now is the time for us to take the next step. Only by banning the shark fin trade once and for all within our borders can we ensure we are no longer supporting an unsustainable use of ocean resources. Recognizing this unsustainability, The Northern Mariana Islands, my home, was the first U.S. insular area to ban the trade of shark fins in 2011.

As an island culture 3,000-plus years old, the people of the Marianas understand and respect the important role that sharks play in maintaining the life of our oceans. And we are not alone. Twelve U.S. states and two territories have also passed their own shark fin bans.

But this patchwork of State laws can be challenging to enforce, and so this is why we need a Federal ban on the shark fin trade in the United States, and that is why I am asking for your support today.

A ban on the shark fin trade is supported by 45 domestic and international airlines, by 21 shipping companies, seven major corporations and more than 645 U.S. businesses and organizations.

A 2016 national poll found four of five Americans supported a national ban on the buying and selling of shark fins. Hundreds of scientists, chefs, fishers, dive, and surf businesses have written to Congress requesting passage of a national shark fin ban.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for this House to act. Please join me by voting "yes" on this critical bill. Vote "yes" to conserve our oceans and the all-important sharks that live in those waters.

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, my friend from California says that, well, California's ban hasn't resulted in any calamities. What he forgets is that virtually all shark fisheries in the United States are found in Florida, Louisiana, and North Carolina. Banning shark finning in California is like banning buffalo hunting in Rhode Island; there just isn't any.

My friend from the Marianas tells us that there are 73 million shark fins in the global market annually. That is a very misleading statement. It comes from a report published by Shelley Clarke. That report gives a range of between 26 and 73 million and makes no differentiation between legally and illegally obtained fins, which, unfortunately, is a defect in this bill itself.

Mr. Speaker, for a different opinion, however, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. McCaul).

Mr. McCaul. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for yielding.

I rise in support of this bill to help end the inhumane practice of shark finning. After a shark's fins are removed, these majestic creatures are thrown into the ocean to die, and multiple species face extinction.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, Congressman SABLAN, for his courageous leadership to introduce this bill, which I strongly support.

The United States banned shark finning. Now we must end the shark fin trade. Major retailers, airliners, and shipping companies refuse to ship or sell shark fin products. And 12 states, including my home State of Texas have bans on shark fin trading. It is time for a Federal ban, Mr. Speaker.

The United States led in ending the trade of trafficking ivory and rhino horns, and now we must lead in the shark fin trade itself.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to end and close with a personal thanks to my wife, Linda, who is an oceanographer who spent many years serving our country in Naval intelligence tracking Soviet submarines, and now she tracks sharks by tagging sharks and following them around the world as they exist.

□ 1415

As she told me when she returned from Guadeloupe Island, on the very same boat that Peter Benchley went out on as he saw the majestic great white shark, in his words, he says that the greatest regret of his life was writing the book "Jaws."

I thank Delegate SABLAN, and I thank my wife, Linda, for great testimony before this committee. I stand in strong support, and I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join us on this momentous day.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, just another shout-out to Congressman McCaul and his wife, who was a fantastic witness at the hearing we had on this bill at the Natural Resources Committee, and also for the leadership of the State of Texas and so many other States, territories, and leaders in the

private sector who understand we have to end this terribly wasteful and cruel global shark fin trade.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CUNNINGHAM).

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, down in South Carolina's Lowcountry, we all understand the importance of a healthy ocean and healthy coastlines, and sharks are a part of that story. Unfortunately, many populations of sharks have severely declined due to the demand for their fins. In South Carolina, we have not imported or exported any shark fins in recent years, and a large number of constituents have contacted me in support of this legislation.

Support for this ban is growing across the country. Twelve U.S. States already have shark fin bans. Private companies are also refusing to ship or sell shark fin products.

Just earlier this year, Canada became the first G20 country to ban the shark fin trade. The United States has already banned the act of shark finning, but we continue to import fins from countries that don't have their own finning bans.

Disturbingly, in the United States, our own government data shows that less than 20 percent of our U.S. shark stocks are sustainably managed. It is time for the United States to end its role in the shark fin trade and stop contributing to the decline of our shark populations.

I am grateful to Delegate SABLAN and Chairman GRIJALVA from the Natural Resources Committee for their leadership on this issue. Also, I thank Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member MCCUAU for his leadership.

Ending the shark fin trade will require a death by a thousand cuts, and we have the opportunity to make a big cut right now. Let's pass the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, my friend from Texas compared banning shark fins to banning ivory. Of course, the difference is that the U.S. was a major consumer of ivory. It is 1 percent of the entire global shark fin market.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES).

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be upfront. I have caught dozens of sharks in my life. I have released every single one of them intact. I have never gone shark fishing. It was unintentional catch. I have never eaten a shark, never had shark fin soup, nor have I any intention or desire to have any of this. But I do represent a State that does have a shark industry that sustainably harvests those.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it is our obligation to actually go to scientists and to go to fisheries managers to get their opinion on what it is that we ought to be doing here.

So, Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter from our Democratic Governor's administration where they talk about this bill.

STATE OF LOUISIANA, DEPARTMENT
OF WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES,
Baton Rouge, LA, July 7, 2017.

Re Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act of 2017,
S. 793, H.R. 1456.

Mr. ACY COOPER,
President, Louisiana Shrimp Association,
Grand Isle, Louisiana.

ACY: As requested by you on June 7, 2017, the department has reviewed the text of Senate bill 793 and House Resolution 1456, also known as the "Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act of 2017" and the "Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act of 2017", respectively. The bills, in their current form, would place unnecessary economic burdens on Louisiana shark fishermen. As long as responsible management is in place, which is currently the case for sharks in the Gulf of Mexico, there is no need for this legislation.

The purpose of these bills as stated by the authors is to "curtail the act of 'finning' sharks while reducing the U.S. contribution to the global shark fin market." The practice of shark finning is already illegal in the United States and Louisiana and has been since the 2000s. All sharks landed in Louisiana must have their fins naturally attached until landed. Once a shark is landed in Louisiana, these fins may then be removed and processed separately.

Information available on NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service commercial statistics website shows that in 2015, 17,059 kilograms (37,530 pounds) of shark fins were exported from the United States to other countries while 24,016 kilograms (52,835 pounds) of shark fins were imported from other countries. The total estimated global shark fin trade, was an estimated 17,500 metric tons (according to a 2015 F.A.O. report on the state of the global market for shark products). These U.S. total imports and exports amount to less than 1% of shark fins traded globally. This bill will likely have little impact on the global trade in shark fins, especially the illegal trade of shark fins. The majority of shark fin exports do not move through the United States. The majority of fins exported from the United States, in the past, moved through California to the Hong Kong Market. However, since the California ban on shark fins in 2015, the shark fin trade now mainly flows through Mexico and Canada in North America. These bills will do little to reduce global trade or curtail illegal practices on the high seas, but will economically impact responsible U.S. fishermen. Data for 2016 were not yet available.

Sharks are indeed a vital part of the marine ecosystem, however those sharks harvested in the United States, along with their fins, are sustainably harvested in accordance with regulations and quotas established by the NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Division and the State of Louisiana. By eliminating a domestic market for legally harvested fins, this legislation will only have adverse impacts on Louisiana fishermen who legally harvest sharks and their fins as well as the coastal fishing communities where they live. These bills will create unnecessary regulatory waste of legally harvested shark parts by not allowing fishermen to sell fins from a legally harvestable shark species. These bills ban one part, the most valuable part, of an otherwise legally harvestable animal creating a situation in which an entire fishery would effectively be shut down. They will either not affect global shark fin markets, or at worst, will encourage further development of unregulated harvest to replace the regulated US landings.

The shark fishery is an important winter fishery in Louisiana as it provides a critical seasonal source of income to a number of commercial fishermen until other fisheries open later in the year.

Possible alternative measures to allow the legal shark fishery of the U.S. to continue to harvest and sell legally obtained fins while working to reduce illegal finning practices:

- 1) Legislation mandating tracking and traceability of legally harvested fins as opposed to an outright ban.
- 2) Provide for tracking and traceability measures of imported and exported fins to determine legal origin of those fins originating from or entering into the U.S.
- 3) Prohibit the importation or exportation of shark fins that can't be verified to have come from legally landed sharks.

Sincerely,

JACK MONTOUSET,
Secretary.

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. They say: "As long as responsible management is in place, which is currently the case for sharks in the Gulf of Mexico, there is no need for this legislation."

They say: "The practice of shark finning is already illegal in the United States and Louisiana and has been since the 2000s."

"These bills will create unnecessary regulatory waste of legally harvested shark parts by not allowing fishermen to sell fins from a legally harvestable shark species."

These bills "will either not affect global shark fin markets, or at worst, will encourage further development of unregulated harvest to replace the regulated U.S. landings."

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a National Geographic article from this year that has quotes from the Mote Marine Laboratory in Florida.

SHARK FIN IS BANNED IN 12 U.S. STATES—BUT IT'S STILL ON THE MENU

SHARK FIN BANS, INTENDED TO REDUCE INSTANCES OF SHARK FINNING, ARE DIFFICULT TO ENFORCE, LEADING SOME TO QUESTION IF THEY'RE WORTH IT

(By Rachel Fobar, Jan. 16, 2019)

But that would be against state law. California is one of 12 states that bans the sale of shark fins—measures to help prevent further declines of shark populations and to deter finning, which has been illegal in U.S. waters since 2000. Although demand for shark fins for soup is greatest in Asian countries, there's significant demand for them in the United States too.

A man who identified himself as the China Gate Restaurant owner's brother says the online listing is a mistake and denies that the restaurant serves the dish.

Finning involves slicing fins off live sharks and tossing the wounded animals overboard, where they sink to the bottom and, unable to swim and pass water over their gills, suffocate, die of blood loss, or get eaten by other predators.

"It's without doubt, the worst act of animal cruelty I've ever seen," says celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay in his television documentary on the shark fishing industry.

Every year, the Animal Welfare Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that supports a national ban on shark fin, updates its list of restaurants that serve shark fin soup and notifies the relevant state enforcement agencies.

But so far, according to the institute, the bans haven't stopped restaurants in at least 10 of the 12 states.

During the past two years, at least five bills relating to the country's shark fin trade have been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. All five died before becoming laws, leaving the fate of sharks in the U.S. uncertain.

Many countries don't regulate shark finning, says Peter Knights, CEO of WildAid, an environmental group that strives to reduce consumption of wildlife products. What this means, activists say, is that Americans could be getting their fins from countries that catch and mutilate sharks, diminishing their already dwindling global populations.

Because of overfishing and the demand for shark fin for soup, more than a quarter of the world's sharks, rays, and chimaeras (a cartilaginous fish also known as ghost sharks) are considered to be threatened. In a 2012 study, researchers found the DNA of eight different sharks, including the endangered scalloped hammerhead, as well as vulnerable species like the shortfin mako and the spiny dogfish, in soup samples collected from around the U.S.

Shark fin soup has long been a status dish in Asian countries, notably China, where its use can be traced back to an emperor from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) who is thought to have invented the dish to show off his power and wealth. Shark fin eventually became exalted as one of the four treasures of Chinese cuisine, along with abalone, sea cucumber, and fish maw (swim bladders).

Today, it's a luxury dish served at weddings as a sign of respect for guests. Preparation of the soup involves boiling the fins and scraping off the skin and meat, leaving behind softened protein fiber, which is sometimes shredded before it goes into the soup.

What is a luxury to some is a headache to understaffed enforcement agencies in the U.S. states that ban shark fin. They say that cases against shark fin vendors in those states can be hard to make. Because the shark fin trade tends to go underground, it has been compared to the illicit drug trade.

"I know it's going on, I know it's out there," says San Francisco marine warden William O'Brien. "But it's a very private matter—it's not the kind of thing that, you know, people are selling to the public."

In addition, according to several law enforcement agents, fines and jail sentences for violating the shark fin ban are generally light and have little deterrent effect.

Knights says a U.S. ban on sales of shark fin would be a significant step forward because it would send the message that selling and consuming shark fin isn't acceptable anymore. The sale of shark fin, he says, "continues to increase the sort of pressure on sharks worldwide."

But, argues Robert Hueter, director of the Center for Shark Research at Mote Marine Laboratory, in Sarasota, Florida, given how difficult it is for some states to enforce their shark fin bans, a nationwide ban would just drive the shark fin market underground—as it's done in San Francisco.

California has about a third of the country's Asian population and is one of the largest consumers of shark fin outside Asia.

When the shark fin ban passed in California in 2011, San Francisco marine warden William O'Brien says he was "charged up." He'd been keeping a list of restaurants to inspect once the ban went into force.

Almost immediately, he and his team received a tip about a supplier, and they confiscated more than 2,000 pounds of shark fin from a warehouse near San Francisco Bay. He estimates that the haul was worth at least \$500,000. The accused, Michael Kwong, a shark fin wholesaler and vocal opponent of the shark fin ban who said his family had been in the business for four generations, pleaded no contest to violating the shark fin

ban. According to court records, he spent 30 days in jail, paid a court fine, and received three years' probation.

Since then, O'Brien says, the leads have dried up. He suspects restaurants and market owners are now storing their shark fin supplies off premises—perhaps in their homes, which would be off-limits to law enforcement without a search warrant.

"Essentially, the market has gone so far underground that it requires more specialization than I have to dig it up," O'Brien says.

O'Brien's overall responsibilities include monitoring for illegal ivory, the pet trade, and illegal animal products in medication, and he must also check hunting and fishing licenses almost daily. He reckons that in any given month, he's able to devote only about two days to shark fin.

"It would be great if I was like, the shark fin guy, and that was all I did," O'Brien laughs.

A complicating factor is that a restauranteur accused of selling shark fin soup may claim it's imitation or made from a species of shark exempt from the ban. Spiny and smooth dogfish sharks, for example, are exempt in New York State. It's possible to identify a species from a freshly cut fin, but once a fin is dried or absorbed in soup, the only way to prove it's a species in violation of the law is through DNA testing.

To ascertain whether a crime has been committed, authorities must establish whether the DNA in a seized sample of soup is actually that of a shark. The specimens Ashley Spicer tests and analyzes as a part of her work in the Wildlife Forensics Lab at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife vary from suspected shark fin soup in plastic to-go containers to frozen fins in vacuum-sealed packaging.

Spicer examined California's 2018 shark cases—all four of them. Only two of those cases were specifically shark fin; the others were a shark attack case and a poaching case. In all, the two shark fin cases she handled in 2018 involved about 20 different shark fins.

Low test numbers don't necessarily represent every California shark fin case that comes to the attention of authorities. If, for example, a case elicits an immediate confession on the part of the accused, authorities may decide that testing isn't necessary.

DNA testing proved successful in a recent case in Plano, Texas, one of the states where shark fin is banned. Mike Stephens, a game warden with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, went into a local dim sum restaurant—in uniform—with a colleague and asked for the "special" menu. And there it was: shark fin soup.

To assure them the shark fin was real, not imitation, the restaurant owner's wife led the wardens to a walk-in freezer where they found about six bags of shark fins. Stephens assumes that the owner, Qi Zhou, and his wife didn't realize the real reason behind the wardens' visit until it was too late. Before they left, Stephens says, Zhou's wife told them they weren't the only ones selling shark fin. The supermarket next door was offering it too, she said.

Sure enough, when the wardens went to the supermarket, Tao Marketplace, to investigate, they found nearly 40 shark carcasses, the tail fins removed, on display in the fresh fish aisle and in storage.

Wearing rubber gloves so as not to contaminate the evidence, they sealed the fins from both places in separate containers and overnighted them to a lab in North Carolina for DNA testing.

The case against the supermarket is still pending, but the restaurant owner was found guilty of selling shark fin and paid a fine:

one dollar. The court also ordered Zhou to make a donation to the Animal Welfare Institute, which totaled less than a thousand dollars, Stephens says.

According to the institute, in Texas and most other states, prison sentences for shark fin transgressions are rare and usually don't exceed six months for a first offense. Fines are usually less than a thousand dollars. By contrast, a single pound of dried shark fin can sell for \$400, and shark fin soup can command anywhere from \$50 to \$200.

"It's tough to get jail time on wildlife cases," says Jesse Paluch, a captain with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Bureau of Environmental Crimes Investigation unit. In New York, he says, judges and prosecutors "see so much crime, so wildlife crime is a little bit lower on the spectrum."

In October 1988, when Robert Hueter was getting his start at the Mote Marine Laboratory, he heard from a colleague that a group of fishermen off the Florida Panhandle had been caught harpooning bottlenose dolphins, whose meat and blood they used to bait sharks. Killing bottlenose dolphins was and still is illegal under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. When the fishermen caught sharks, they sliced off their fins and threw the mutilated animals, still alive, back into the water.

This is sick, Hueter says he thought at the time. He'd never heard of shark finning, so he contacted Nelson Bryant, a reporter he knew at The New York Times, who wrote a pioneering story about the practice. Today, shark finning is the subject of documentaries, public protests, and Facebook posts.

Hueter says the fishermen were handed minor fines for killing the dolphins—and no penalty for finning the sharks. "There was no crime in what they'd done with the sharks," he says.

Since then, Hueter has been an advocate for sharks. Which is why, he says, he's against a national shark fin ban.

"The folks that are pushing the fin ban campaign want to simplify it to this very simple message—that if we ban the fin trade in the United States, we save sharks all around the world," Hueter says. "That is so simplistic and so wrong."

He says that of course he's against finning and overfishing but that cutting the fins off a legally caught dead shark isn't cruel, and banning a specific dish won't stop shark finning because shark finning is already illegal in U.S. waters. But, he says, a ban will ensure that fins from dead sharks are wasted.

"It would cause [fishermen] to have to throw the fins into the dumpster. It goes totally against our doctrine of full utilization of fishery products—that when we harvest fishes from the sea, we don't want to throw stuff away. We want to use absolutely everything we can."

David Shiffman, a marine conservation biologist with Simon Fraser University, in Vancouver, Canada, and the man behind the popular Twitter account @whysharksmatter, says it's unreasonable for people to criticize using shark fins for soup when they may eat shark meat in other forms.

"There are people who are outraged at the idea of consuming a bowl of shark fin soup who are not outraged at the idea of eating a mako shark steak on the grill," he says. "From my perspective, as a shark conservation biologist, either way you've got a dead shark. Shark fin soup has sort of become this boogie man of ocean conservation."

As an alternative to a national ban, in 2018 Hueter helped draft the Sustainable Shark Fisheries and Trade Act, which Representative DANIEL WEBSTER, a Florida Republican, says he plans to reintroduce this session. This bill, Hueter says, would allow imports

only from countries that prohibit finning and promote shark conservation.

But Susan Millward, director of the marine animal program at the Animal Welfare Institute, says a blanket ban is still the best answer.

“Even if you have a sustainable shark fin trade, there’s still going to be a trade in shark finning,” she says. “There’s always going to be people who want to flout it.”

Chinese basketball star Yao Ming pushes a white ceramic cup of shark fin soup across a table. In an aquarium tank to his right, a bleeding computer-generated shark sinks to the bottom. “Remember,” he says, staring into the camera lens, “when the buying stops, the killing can too.”

Since 2011, consumption of shark fin soup in China has fallen by about 80 percent, both because of national bans on serving shark fin at government banquets and the effect of celebrity-backed awareness campaigns such as Yao Ming’s, seen by millions of Chinese.

According to a 2018 WildAid report, when WildAid began its Chinese anti-shark fin campaign in 2006, 75 percent of consumers didn’t realize the soup they were eating was made from shark, and many who did know mistakenly thought that sharks’ fins grew back after they were cut off.

Many conservationists believe that similar awareness-raising efforts in the U.S. would curb demand. People generally don’t give much thought to what they’re eating, Millward says. “It’s just a lack of connecting the dots with where this product came from, how it started with a live animal and how much suffering was endured to reach this finished product . . . These animals are dying painfully, and their whole ecosystems are being affected—for what?”

Her question begs another: Why shark fin? It’s widely known that the fin adds no taste or health benefits to shark fin soup; rather, it gives the soup a crystalline, noodle-like texture, which can be replicated almost indistinguishably with mung bean paste or melon. What’s more, because shark fins are cartilage and rigid protein fibers, they need to be cooked for hours, even a full day, to soften them enough to be edible. “If you cook my belt for 24 hours, it would be edible too,” Knights says.

Ironically, as conservationists, chefs, and even consumers themselves acknowledge, the flavor of shark fin soup—a dish that has ignited international controversy, spurred people to write countless letters to the United States Congress, and led to a massive awareness campaign—comes not from the fins but from the chicken broth used as the soup’s base.

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. In fact, the director of shark research for that institute says, “The folks that are pushing the fin ban campaign want to simplify it to this very simple message that if we ban the fin trade in the United States, we save sharks all around the world. That is so simplistic and so wrong.

It would cause fishermen “to have to throw fins into the dumpster. It goes totally against our doctrine of full utilization of fishery products, that when we harvest fishes from the sea, we don’t want to throw stuff away. We want to use absolutely everything we can.”

David Shiffman, a marine conservation biologist with Simon Fraser University, also talks about how this is a flawed approach. He lays out an alternative, which my friend from Florida, Congressman WEBSTER, and the Mote

Marine Laboratory director of the shark institute there have advocated for as well.

Mr. Speaker, there is no one in this body who supports the concept of shark finning. But let’s be clear on that. No one here supports this concept of finning a shark and just letting the rest of it drop to the bottom and die. No one does. But we have to understand that our entire fisheries management practice, the State of Louisiana having one of the largest commercial fisheries in the Nation, that this is part of the overall consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. VEASEY). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentleman.

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. This is part of the overall consideration. Yet this bill attempts to gut legally sustainable shark harvesting that is part of the overall fisheries management process and doesn’t take into consideration what impact that will have.

In closing, this bill is not the right approach. I agree with the objective, but all we are doing here is pushing illegally harvested species to other countries, as opposed to truly stopping the problem. There are successful efforts out there that are demonstrated to work, whereas this simply, again, promotes illegal harvesting.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, if this is a question that requires us to listen to the experts and the scientists about how to end the global shark fin trade, then it is not much of a debate, because over 150 scientists are on record supporting this bill. The same consensus exists among leaders at aquariums, academic institutions, and other places.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman’s courtesy and his leadership and our friend from the Northern Mariana Islands for moving this legislation forward.

This is about leadership in terms of ending the global practice. My colleague from Louisiana understates the power that the United States has in terms of getting our policies right. Yes, we have outlawed shark finning in 2010, but the international traffic continues, and we need to take this next step.

This is a progression of efforts to try to deal with animal welfare. This is one of the first arguments we hear whether it is illegal poaching, the ivory trade, or other endangered species, we have been able to set the table on a global stage to be able to change the dynamics, to change the economics, and to change public perception.

Sharks are declining globally. There may be a species or two here or there, but, overall, this apex predator species—so important for the health of the ecosystem—is in peril, and the practice of shark finning is part of this.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard about de-finning while they are still alive and discarding them back in the water which is a very common practice. We know that my State of Oregon is one where people stepped up and ended this barbaric practice. We have mobilized voting initiatives where we deal with problems of trafficking with exotic species. It has proven that our action in 2010 prohibiting the taking of fins was not enough as long as this global trade continues unchecked. There still is a market for the fins in the United States and around the world, and it is fueled by imports sourced from all over the world, including locations with no ban. We are one of the top 15 shark fin importing nations.

Who knew?

As a result, it is highly likely that shark fins sold in the United States came from sharks that have been brutally finned.

I am pleased that we are taking action to do the right thing and ban the trade of shark fins. I hope the Senate takes this bill up quickly and passes it so we can get it enacted into law. This is one of the things we could actually agree with. Mr. Speaker, you have heard the bipartisan support evidenced here today.

But I hope that we can continue forward with an animal welfare agenda. There is a series of bills on a bipartisan basis, for example, the PREPARED Act, to help animals during natural disasters, the Wildlife Conservation and Anti-Trafficking Act to combat wildlife trafficking, and the SAFE Act to prevent horse slaughter.

We have these bipartisan pieces of legislation with major sources of cosponsors. They are teed up and ready to go. I hope this passes today with overwhelming support, and it is one more step as we implement an animal welfare agenda that is one of the areas where we can work together on a bipartisan basis to make the world a little better.

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot about the letter signed by 150 scientists in support of this bill. We ought to point out that only 10 of those 150 scientists actually are scientists with expertise in shark fisheries. But every one of the scientists who signed the Wildlife Conservation Society letter in opposition to this bill is recognized as an active professional shark researcher and expert in the field.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEBSTER).

Mr. WEBSTER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. McCLINTOCK for yielding.

I rise today in opposition to H.R. 737, the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act. As a Floridian and member of the House Natural Resources Committee, promoting shark conservation has long been a priority of mine. I am glad to see sharks receiving national attention.

Sharks play a crucial role in our ocean’s ecosystem, and yet, they face a

grave threat: shark finning, a cruel practice of capturing sharks, clipping their fins, and casting the rest of it to a slow death in the ocean. This practice is cruel and inhumane.

I was a member of the legislature almost 30 years ago when Florida was one of the first States to ban shark finning. Since then, finning has become completely illegal in the United States.

Unfortunately, finning still occurs in unregulated waters around our globe. H.R. 737 will do nothing to protect sharks from being finned in those areas. Instead, it would require American fishermen who legally and responsibly land sharks to destroy or discard their fins, leading to terrible waste.

Many scientists, conservationists, and commercial fishermen have vocally opposed this bill and have said it will not advance shark restoration or stop the practice of finning.

This bill would have a devastating effect on responsible American fishermen, including many in my own district in Florida who have made sacrifices to conserve and rebuild our shark populations.

I offer a separate bill, an alternative, H.R. 788, one that has been sponsored and supported by Senator RUBIO in the Senate and is probably the key bill there for this particular issue. Instead of banning the sale of humanely sourced shark fins, my bill would encourage bad actors in the shark fin market to create science-based management systems for shark conservation.

□ 1430

My bill requires any nation seeking to export shark, ray, or skate to the United States to first be certified by NOAA that it has conservation policies in place that rise to the standards of U.S. fishermen and that forbid nations to practice shark finning.

The U.S. plays an important role on the world stage in fishing management and conservation. H.R. 737 would remove the U.S. from the shark fin market; it would silence the leading voice in shark conservation—my bill would amplify it—and ensure no finned shark fins enter into the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to make the best choice for sustaining shark populations long-term and oppose this deeply flawed bill before us today.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. WEBSTER for his engagement on this issue. I think his intentions are noble. I think he wants to help end the global shark fin trade. Unfortunately, though, his bill just won't work.

We did incorporate some of that bill, the part, frankly, that would not cost a lot of money. By doing so, we added skates and rays to the seafood import monitoring program. That is a good suggestion, because skates and rays are also not doing well globally, and they deserve our attention.

But the rest of the bill is expensive, cumbersome, and, frankly, it is just not going to work. It would require a complicated, expensive certification scheme that might sound good on paper, but we know the real world that we live in.

In the marine fisheries management in the United States right now, we are years, and sometimes decades, behind having the resources we need for adequate and timely stock assessments, even for the fisheries that we are already trying to manage right now.

So the idea that we would somehow be able to do this, be able to afford it, and also do it in a way that we could comply with in this country so we could hold other countries around the world to that standard, if we are unable to do all of that stuff, then requiring other countries to meet that standard would trigger a WTO violation and we would do nothing to help end the global shark fin trade.

Again, I appreciate the gentleman's interest in this issue. I know that Florida has been said to be the heart of the opposition to this bill, but we should note that 19 members of the Florida delegation support this bill, including 6 Republicans in the Florida delegation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear: Killing a shark for its fin while throwing away the rest of the carcass is contemptible; it is immoral; it is wrong; and it has been illegal and banned in the United States since 1993. American fishermen don't do this. American fishermen are the good guys in this story.

This bill does something very different. It requires American fishermen to throw away the fins when they kill a shark. That is just as wasteful, just as despicable, and it is not going to stop foreign bad actors. It will kill American fishing. It will destroy the livelihoods of Americans who have followed the law and who are responsibly accounting for their entire catch. It is not going to help our domestic shark populations. They are doing quite fine.

NOAA currently manages 42 shark species, along with the commercial and recreational shark fisheries. None of these 42 species in the Atlantic are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. As I pointed out earlier, the most recent results of the NOAA fisheries' longest running shark survey show our domestic populations increasing, with scientists capturing and tagging more than ever before.

It is a shame that we are here to blame American fishermen, who are following all of the laws and doing everything right.

And remember this: Under H.R. 737, sharks can still be legally caught in U.S. waters; however, they will be forced to cut off the fins and throw them into the garbage. Ask yourself: Is this right?

Congress has long supported the full utilization of landed seafood in order to

obtain the maximum economic value of our limited marine resources, all consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This legislation will result in little more than wasted resources.

The administration opposes this legislation. It writes:

We cannot support the Shark Fin Sale Elimination Act because of the bill's negative impact on U.S. fishermen that would outweigh its minimal benefit to shark conservation. This would hurt U.S. fishermen who currently harvest and sell sharks and shark fins in a sustainable manner under strict Federal management.

Industry opposes this legislation. They write:

H.R. 737 would effectively put an end to all shark fishing. The revenue realized from fin sales can comprise up to 50 percent of a large coastal shark's value. Requiring the discard or destruction of shark fins is also wasteful, both as a food resource and an economic resource that helps sustain rural coastal fishing communities here in America. It has long been the policy of Congress to encourage full utilization of land and catch in order to obtain the maximum economic value of our limited marine resources.

And, finally, scientists oppose this legislation. Two of the leading scientists in the field write:

If the shark fin trade in the United States were completely eliminated, the direct impact on reducing global shark mortality would likely be insignificant. The elimination of United States-supplied fins in world markets would open the door to increased market share for illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing nations not practicing sustainable shark fishing, including those that have not yet prohibited finning.

This legislation follows a familiar theme we hear from the other side: Blame Americans first for the world's problems. This legislation is the definition of a solution in search of a problem.

I am sorry that some of my Republican colleagues have been convinced to support this legislation, but I hope that today's debate has shined a bit of truth on the issue.

Let me just quote from the humane society quickly. Their reasoning for this legislation is that: "The United States has a robust market for shark fins, many of which likely were obtained through finning."

Let me state again, "likely were obtained." This is the science and data that we are using to support this legislation, "likely were obtained." Mind you, we make up less than 1 percent of the global market.

Shark finning will continue across the rest of the globe, and it will continue to focus on the market in South and Southeast Asia. We will have lost our ability to have managed our resources and support our local fishing industries.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to oppose this misguided and misconceived legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, again, I agree with my friend: We should listen to the scientists—not the two who my friend

cited in his closing arguments, but how about the over 150 who are on record in support of this bill? We should listen to them.

We should listen to the many States and territories and other nations, including, recently, Canada, our neighbor to the north.

We should listen to the many corporate leaders around the world, all of whom have reached the inevitable conclusion that, if you are serious about ending this wasteful and inhumane and horrific practice of shark finning, then you have to tackle the shark fin trade; you have to ban the possession and sale of shark fins, because, if you don't, we know here in the United States we have banned the practice of shark finning for years, and yet we have continued to be part of and contributed to the global shark fin trade because we don't ban the possession and trade and sale of the fin itself.

That is what this bill does.

And in terms of U.S. fishermen who are, as my friend says, following the laws and doing everything right, well, the good news is they are going to be just fine under this law. We know that because, in States like California, Oregon, Texas, and other places, folks who want to continue fishing for shark meat have been able to do so, even though those States have passed bans just like this on the possession, trade, and sale of shark fins.

This is a good bill. It is an overwhelmingly bipartisan bill. It is a bill that includes support from 19 members of the Florida delegation, including 6 Republicans from that delegation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes," and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BLUMENAUER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 737, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION EXTENSION ACT

Mr. SABLAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 925) to extend the authorization of appropriations for allocation to carry out approved wetlands conservation projects under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act through fiscal year 2024.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 295

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "North American Wetlands Conservation Extension Act".

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Section 7(c) of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4406(c)) is amended by striking "not to exceed—" and all that follows through paragraph (5) and inserting "not to exceed \$60,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2020 through 2024."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAM) and the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SABLAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the measure under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands?

There was no objection.

Mr. SABLAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would reauthorize the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, a partnership-based program that leverages non-Federal funds to protect and restore wetland and associated habitat.

NAWCA has enjoyed bipartisan support in the past, and this bill is no exception.

The bill authorizes NAWCA for 5 years at \$60 million per year.

NAWCA is considered one of the most cost-effective conservation programs. Each Federal dollar invested in NAWCA is typically matched by more than \$3 from non-Federal partners at the local and State level, including corporations, private landowners, and nonprofits.

Thanks to NAWCA, almost 29.8 million acres of habitat have been protected.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 925 reauthorizes conservation projects under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, NAWCA, through fiscal year 2024.

I readily concede this is a popular program. Even without an authorization, the appropriators put \$42 million into this last year. The sponsors of the bill, obviously, want more, authorizing \$60 million a year. That is higher than any appropriation to date. I am concerned that, in a time where we are running record and perilous deficits, we ought to consider the level which some of these programs should be funded.

Much of the money under NAWCA is used to obtain conservation easements and wetlands outright to benefit migratory birds and fish. According to

the Fish and Wildlife Service, the program has benefited almost 30 million acres of wetland habitat in North America since its inception 30 years ago. It is a very good thing.

Here is the problem, though: The Federal Government is already landlord to 640 million acres of the country and is doing a poor job of maintaining what we already have. For example, the National Park Service is facing a nearly \$12 billion deferred maintenance backlog. The question I would raise today is whether we really need to authorize increased funding to buy even more land.

□ 1445

It would be one thing if Congress had taken strong action to address this backlog by moving H.R. 1225 by Congressman ROB BISHOP, the former chairman and currently ranking member of the Natural Resources Committee.

That was a favorably reported bill. It has overwhelming support with 329 bipartisan cosponsors. That bill would take excess funds from new energy development and target these deteriorating lands so that people as well as migratory birds and fish can enjoy them.

I recognize that H.R. 925 simply authorizes an existing program, but it is imperative to take into account the realities that our current Federal lands are facing. Acquiring more land when we can't take care of the land we already control is not a wise use of our resources.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SABLAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON), who is the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and I rise in strong support of my bill, H.R. 925, the North American Wetlands Conservation Extension Act.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, Congressman WITTMAN from Virginia, for coauthoring this measure with me and for his leadership on this issue; not just on this bill, but on this issue. He is a stalwart supporter and he works extremely hard on making sure our wetlands and environment are protected.

As members of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, Congressman WITTMAN and I have the privilege of evaluating and approving NAWCA-funded projects in the United States, in Canada, and in Mexico.

On that commission, we share a responsibility to ensure that everyone in America can use and can enjoy the natural resources that belong to all of us.

Since 1989, North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants have funded close to 3,000 projects, carried out by more than 6,000 partners. Every year, restoration and conservation projects funded by NAWCA support 7,500 jobs across our country, from fisheries biologists and engineers, to construction teams and supply retailers.