

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

# WETLANDS CONSERVATION AND ACCESS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2025

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2316) to amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to provide that interest on obligations held in the Federal aid to wildlife restoration fund shall become available for apportionment at the beginning of fiscal year 2033.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2316

*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 “Wetlands Conservation and Access Improvement Act of 2025”.

## SEC. 2. AVAILABILITY OF INTEREST ON OBLIGATIONS HELD IN FEDERAL AID TO WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUND.

Section 3(b)(2)(C) of the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 669b(b)(2)(C)) is amended by striking “2026” and inserting “2033”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOYLE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2316, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2316, the Wetlands Conservation and Access Improvement Act of 2025.

This bill is sponsored by Representative HURD of Colorado, and it would ensure that the interest from unallocated Pittman-Robertson funds continue to go to North America Wetlands Conservation Act, or NAWCA.

NAWCA is one of the most successful conservation programs administered by the Federal Government and has proven to be invaluable all over the country as well as in my home State of Arkansas.

Over 100,000 people visit Arkansas each year to hunt waterfowl in the pristine flyways of The Natural State. Across North America, NAWCA projects have conserved nearly 34 mil-

lion acres of wetland habitat for migratory waterfowl.

Funds generated under Pittman-Robertson come from excise taxes on the sale of hunting equipment and firearms. Various State and wildlife agencies, as represented by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, are on record supporting this approach, further confirming its viability and effectiveness.

I commend my colleague from Colorado (Mr. HURD) for being a champion for sportsmen and -women, and I thank him for his work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The Wetlands Conservation and Access Improvement Act of 2025 would extend critical wetlands conservation funding through 2033.

Many of my constituents live and breathe the wetlands conservation. Whether you are a duck hunter on the river or a birder exploring the coastal marshes or a family counting on clean water and flood protection, wetlands deliver for everyone.

Since 1937, the Pittman-Robertson Act has created successful conservation models where hunters and sportsmen support wildlife restoration through excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment.

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Currently, the interest earned from these funds supports wetlands protection through 2026, and this bill ensures that funding continues uninterrupted through 2033.

This is conservation funding that works. It is user funded, results driven, and focuses on protecting habitats that benefit all Americans. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act has helped to protect millions of acres of wetlands and grasslands across North America.

I commend Representatives Hurd and Elfreth for their bipartisan leadership in advancing this proven funding mechanism and ensuring that future generations inherit healthy wetlands and thriving wildlife.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2316, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. HURD), the lead sponsor on the bill.

Mr. HURD of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my legislation, H.R. 2316, the Wetlands Conservation and Access Improvement Act of 2025.

This bipartisan legislation ensures that the interest earned on unallocated Pittman-Robertson funds will continue to support wetlands restoration through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act for years to come.

For nearly a century, the Pittman-Robertson Act has stood as one of the most successful conservation funding models in the world. It works because sportsmen and sportswomen pay a dedicated excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. That money is then invested in habitat restoration, public access, and in hunter education.

Since 2004, interest generated from these funds has added an average of nearly \$11 million per year to support wetland and waterfowl conservation across North America. That funding is leveraged by nonprofit and State partners, often doubling or tripling the Federal investment, delivering high-impact results.

This bill is about safeguarding that model. It is about making sure that the dollars contributed by sportsmen and sportswomen continue to be put to work by conserving the wetlands that sustain wildlife, outdoor access, and rural economies, including in places like Colorado's San Luis Valley, where thousands of acres of wetlands benefit from these funds.

There is no better conservationist than the American sportsman, and this legislation honors their legacy by protecting the very lands and waters that they have long fought to preserve.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN and the staff of the House Committee on Natural Resources for working with my office to get this bill introduced. I thank my colleague from across the aisle, Representative ELFRETH, for co-leading this legislation with me. I also thank all of the organizations who are supporting this effort.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully ask my House colleagues to join me in supporting this commonsense, bipartisan bill.

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this really great legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, by passing this commonsense legislation, the House will ensure that we can continue conserving vital waterfowl habitats for years to come.

This is important for sportsmen and -women who depend on healthy wetland habitats for hunting, fishing, and other forms of wildlife-centered recreation. H.R. 2316 is a win for conservation and the sportsmen and -women communities alike. NAWCA has proven to be a very successful program.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support 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 Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2316.

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.

## BOLTS DITCH ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1729) to amend the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act to allow for additional entities to be eligible to complete the maintenance work on Bolts Ditch and the Bolts Ditch Headgate within the Holy Cross Wilderness, Colorado.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1729

*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 “Bolts Ditch Act”.

## SEC. 2. ADDITIONAL ENTITIES ALLOWED TO MAINTAIN BOLTS DITCH AND THE BOLTS DITCH HEADGATE.

Section 1101(a) of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Public Law 116-9) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: “, the Eagle River Water and Sanitation District, a Colorado Special District, or the Upper Eagle Regional Water Authority, an authority organized under the laws of the State of Colorado”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOYLE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

## GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material in the RECORD on H.R. 1729, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1729, the Bolts Ditch Act, sponsored by Representative NEGUSE.

This straightforward legislation allows additional entities to conduct routine maintenance activities on Bolts Ditch and the Bolts Ditch Headgate in Colorado.

Bolts Ditch and the Bolts Ditch Headgate are water facilities located near the town of Minturn, Colorado, that divert water into Bolts Lake. In 1980, Congress established the Holy Cross Wilderness in the White River and San Isabel National Forests but inadvertently failed to include Bolts Ditch among a list of existing water facilities excluded from the designation.

This has prevented the structure from being rebuilt or repaired for more than three decades. The inability to rehabilitate and rebuild the Bolts Ditch Headgate prevented new development in the area, which would have required the expansion of Bolts Lake to provide a water supply for surrounding homes.

Congress corrected this error in 2019 by allowing the town of Minturn to access Bolts Ditch for maintenance and repairs. H.R. 1729 builds on this legislation by allowing additional local entities, including the Eagle River Water and Sanitation District and the Upper Eagle Regional Water Authority, to maintain this vital infrastructure near Bolts Lake.

This is commonsense legislation that will help local Coloradans and improve the operational efficiency of this important water infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1729, the Bolts Ditch Act, introduced by my colleague and good friend from Colorado (Mr. NEGUSE).

Mr. Speaker, the Bolts Ditch Headgate and ditch segment are located within the Holy Cross Wilderness in Colorado's White River National Forest. This infrastructure is essential for delivering water to the Bolts Lake Reservoir, supporting water supply needs and economic development in Eagle County.

Mr. Speaker, to balance the protection of the wilderness area with the continued operation of Bolts Ditch, Congress previously authorized the town of Minturn access to use, maintain, and repair the headgate and ditch under the John Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act.

The Bolts Ditch Act would expand this authority to the Eagle River Water and Sanitation District and the Upper Eagle Regional Water Authority as eligible entities.

Under this new authority, they would be eligible to receive a permit from the Secretary of Agriculture for non-motorized access to use, maintain, and repair Bolts Ditch Headgate and 450 feet of Bolts Ditch.

Representative NEGUSE's legislation would ensure continued access to critical water infrastructure, and promote efficient regional water supply management while protecting the wilderness area.

It would also support higher in-stream flows for Cross Creek, reduce energy consumption, and foster long-term economic benefits for Eagle County. This is a priority for this community, and I thank Representative NEGUSE for his hard work and leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. NEGUSE), the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. NEGUSE. Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I thank the gentlewoman

from Oregon (Ms. HOYLE), my colleague and the ranking member. I also thank Chairman WESTERMAN for his support and his team and his staff for giving us the opportunity here to consider a number of bills that are bipartisan, common sense, and certainly mean a lot to the folks who I represent out West.

Mr. Speaker, as you may know, I represent Colorado's Second Congressional District. It is an incredibly large geographical district. It is a district that spans across more than 8,000 square miles. It is larger than eight States on the eastern seaboard and spans 12 counties and over 55 towns.

I have the privilege of representing this incredible district each and every day back home in Colorado. When you represent a district of that size and scale, you learn early on how important it is to be present in your communities to be able to listen directly to constituents, local leaders, the folks on the ground, about problems that you can ultimately help to solve.

This bill is a perfect example. It is a bill that has been described well by the chairman and the ranking member that, in effect, would ensure that a number of different water authorities—specifically, the Eagle River Water and Sanitation District and the Upper Eagle Regional Water Authority—would have access, as the town of Minturn already does, to the Bolts Ditch structure.

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It builds on legislation that we successfully got across the finish line several years ago. It is common sense. It is bipartisan, and it means a great deal to the folks that I represent in western Colorado.

I hope that my colleagues can support this measure. I look forward to doing everything that needs to be done to get it to the President's desk.

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

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, again, Mr. NEGUSE's bill is a straightforward bill that will improve the maintenance of Bolts Ditch and the Bolts Ditch Headgate near Minturn, Colorado.

Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 1729, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1729.

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.