

the one- to two-pound range, as well as larger specimens, are already valuable components of our processing operations and product lines, despite misleading claims made by entities like the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

We are equally troubled by the legislative process that produced this proposal without meaningful consultation from the processors who have pioneered Maryland's on-the-ground response to the blue catfish invasion. Members of our coalition attempted outreach to Representative Elfreth's office but were unfortunately met with a resistance to engage in substantive dialogue regarding the bill's impacts on private industry.

Ultimately, we share the goal of addressing the ecological challenges posed by invasive blue catfish and strengthening Maryland's seafood economy. However, we believe public funds would be far more effective if directed toward initiatives that can help the watermen, the processors, and the people in our working waterfront communities. For example, USDA grant funding secured by Congressman Andy Harris has helped several Maryland processors to make investments into costly new facilities upgrades that we otherwise would not have been able to make. New programs should build upon, not undercut, investments that have already been made by taxpayers.

Without a strong processing sector, Maryland cannot sustain a viable blue catfish industry. We remain ready and willing to work collaboratively with Representative Elfreth, Representative Wittman, and other sponsors of this legislation to identify policies that genuinely support watermen, processors, and working waterfront communities while continuing to remove invasive blue catfish from the Chesapeake Bay.

Sincerely,

NICK HARGROVE,
Tilghman Island Seafood, Tilghman, MD.
STEPHANIE PAZZAGLIA,
J.J. McDonnell Seafood, Elkridge, MD.
AMANDA WILLIAMS,
BSA Seafood, Grasonville, MD.
PATRICK WELSH JR.,
Reliant Fish Company, Jessup, MD.

Ms. ELFRETH. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Madam Speaker, again, I reiterate my appreciation to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN), the committee staff, and all the stakeholders who spent the last year crafting this creative solution to a problem that threatens the economy and ecology of the greatest natural resource we have in Maryland and Virginia, the Chesapeake Bay.

This is an innovative solution. When you visit with other folks who are policymakers, what we hate to hear is, "We have always done it this way," or, "We have never done it that way."

This moment, this crisis that we are experiencing in the Chesapeake Bay, requires innovation, creativity, partnerships, and collaboration. That is exactly what the MAWS Act represents, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WITTMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Madam Speaker, as we have heard, this bill does quite a bit to open up free markets for fishermen who want to be able to use this very abundant resource. Blue catfish are incredibly abundant—in fact, to the detriment of other species that everybody loves.

Opening up free markets and opening up opportunities for those fishermen is incredibly important. What this also does is to take down bureaucratic impediments.

We know, right now, because of the structure that USDA has to inspect these plants that process catfish, it creates an inordinate stress on that industry. For many of them, because they don't predominate in processing blue catfish, they can't afford to have a full-time USDA inspector in their plant.

What this will do is to say: Let's look at other ways to be able to utilize it. This is a great source of protein. As the world today looks for protein—remember, there is a protein deficit around the world, and we have an overabundance of protein here in the Chesapeake Bay with these blue catfish—we ought to be looking at other ways to do that, not just for human consumption.

As Ms. ELFRETH talked about, there is a place for human consumption of these fish, but there is also a place outside of that that commercial fishermen could fill if we allow them to be used for other purposes, especially for pet food.

If you look at one of the industries today that is the fastest growing industry in the United States, it is the pet industry. Why wouldn't we look at these opportunities that will help our watermen, help the environment, and help other populations like crabs and striped bass? We want to do that. We want to make sure we are doing those things that will help our economy and that will alleviate some of the bureaucratic impediments for these individuals to work hard and make a living on the water.

As I said, my son is a waterman. He goes out every day with no assurance about what he will catch. He is one of the true last independent businesspeople left in the United States. When you go out today, you are not sure if you are going to catch anything.

If you have something that creates undue pressure on what you are relying on to make a living, then you want to try to alleviate that and create that balance there. This does that.

This takes some of the pressure off the blue crab population that, for the last decade, has been under tremendous pressure in the Chesapeake Bay. It takes pressure off the striped bass populations that right now are in decline.

Watermen in Virginia and Maryland rely on the striped bass. It is a heavily managed fishery, but when you have these other pressures on there, we want to make sure that we have the right balance.

What this does is to open up the door to make sure that those things happen,

that we look to enhance coastal economies that right now are under significant duress. Watermen struggle and have to fish multiple species in order to make a living. This would be a great enhancement for them.

If we can do this, it helps the area economically. It also takes away some of the burdens on seafood processors that have those burdens. Sometimes, they can't get into this industry because of the regulatory burdens. This is a great way for us to do that.

The economic impact is going to be significant, I would argue, not just for the Chesapeake Bay but also for the surrounding areas that rely upon the bounty that comes out of the Chesapeake Bay.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4294, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4294, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. SELF. Madam 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.

□ 1710

GATEWAY PARTNERSHIP ACT

Mr. WITTMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5254) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into an agreement with the Gateway Arch Park Foundation to host private events in Gateway Arch National Park buildings, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5254

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 "Gateway Partnership Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **FOUNDATION.**—The term "Foundation" means the Gateway Arch Park Foundation, a nonprofit organization that serves as the official philanthropic partner of the Park.

(2) **PARK.**—The term "Park" means Gateway Arch National Park.

(3) **PARK BUILDING.**—The term "Park building" means—

(A) the Arch Visitor Center;

(B) the Old Courthouse; and

(C) any other building administered or managed by the Secretary as part of the Park that is open to the public.

(4) **SECRETARY.**—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 3. GATEWAY ARCH NATIONAL PARK PARTNER AGREEMENT PILOT PROJECT.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary, in accordance with subsection (b), may enter into a one-

time agreement for a period not to exceed five years with the Foundation to host private events at the Park, which may include the use of Park buildings.

(b) **TERMS AND CONDITIONS.**—An agreement entered into under subsection (a) shall include terms and conditions to protect the resources and values of the Park, including—

(1) dates and times during which the Foundation may be the exclusive organization that holds a special event in specified Park buildings;

(2)(A) the maximum number of events that can be held per month; and

(B) appropriate National Park Service staffing levels necessary to ensure public safety and resource protection during such events;

(3) liability insurance in an amount sufficient to protect the interests of the United States that lists the United States as additionally insured;

(4) a provision stating that the Federal Government and agents and employees of the Federal Government will not be held liable for claims for damages or suits for any injuries or deaths from any cause resulting from the occupancy and use of specified Park buildings by the Foundation;

(5) a provision allowing for the modification or cancellation of the terms and conditions of the agreement, except that any modified agreement shall still comply with the terms and conditions described in subparagraphs (1) through (4); and

(6) any other terms and conditions as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) **USE.**—Private events hosted at the Park or in Park buildings through an agreement entered into under subsection (a)—

(1) shall be limited to activities—

(A) consistent with the purposes of the Park; and

(B) compatible with National Park Service programs;

(2) shall not include activities that degrade the integrity, appearance, or purposes of the Park; and

(3) shall not take place during times or in locations that prevent or disrupt public use or access to the Park or Park buildings.

(d) **RECOVERY OF COSTS.**—In entering into an agreement under subsection (a), the Secretary—

(1) shall charge a fee to cover the cost of maintaining the Park and Park buildings with respect to wear and tear resulting from the private events; and

(2) notwithstanding any other provision of law, may recover all costs incurred as a result of the private events and use of the Park and Park buildings, including maintenance, utilities, administrative expenses, security, and personnel costs.

(e) **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE-SPONSORED EVENTS.**—Nothing in this Act prevents the National Park Service from hosting events or issuing permits to other individuals or entities for special events or otherwise, as appropriate, in the Park or Park buildings.

(f) **SUNSET.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The authority to enter into and carry out an agreement with the Foundation pursuant to this Act shall sunset on the date that is 7 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

(2) **EFFECT ON EXISTING AGREEMENT.**—Any existing agreement entered into under this section shall terminate, notwithstanding any terms within such agreement, on the date that is 7 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

(g) **SAVING CLAUSE.**—Nothing in this Act affects any other authority of the Secretary to issue special use permits or agreements.

(h) Not later than 4 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate a report evaluating the implementation of this Act, including the—

(1) operational impacts of the agreement on visitor access, security, staffing, and facilities management; and

(2) financial implications of the agreement, including fees collected and costs recovered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) and the gentlewoman from Maryland (Ms. ELFRETH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WITTMAN. Madam 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. 5254, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5254, the Gateway Partnership Act. This is bipartisan legislation sponsored by Representatives Bell and Wagner of Missouri. This bill creates an innovative new model for public-private partnerships at our national parks by authorizing the National Park Service to enter into an agreement with the Gateway Arch Park Foundation to host events and community programming at Gateway Arch National Park.

Gateway Arch towers over the city of St. Louis, Missouri, and welcomes millions of visitors each year to the first city built across the Mississippi River. With its silver curve soaring over 600-foot high across the riverbank, Gateway Arch serves as a reminder of the grit and bravery our Nation's early pioneers showed when they left all that they had and all that they knew behind to venture out toward the American West. The arch also links America's original pioneer spirit of the past with the drive to forge new futures today.

Recently, the park's main philanthropic partnership, the Gateway Arch Park Foundation, completed a trailblazing, multimillion-dollar public-private partnership that reconnected the city and waterfront area and created a new visitor center and green spaces. It also revitalized historic buildings around Gateway Arch.

H.R. 5254 helps ensure that these newly renovated facilities, such as the Old Courthouse and Arch Visitor Center, are used to their full potential by allowing the foundation to host events in these spaces.

Allowing the foundation to fully utilize these facilities would not only create new jobs but also generate an estimated \$780,000 in additional revenue for the park. H.R. 5254 does this while maintaining strict guardrails around the usage of the park to ensure public access is not impeded and no park resources are damaged during these events.

The bill is narrow, limited, and bipartisan. It is a commonsense way to le-

verage private expertise and local investment to strengthen a signature national park and generate new revenue to support its operation.

Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 5254, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ELFRETH. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5254, offered by my colleagues Representative BELL and Representative WAGNER of Missouri, which will support the relationship between Gateway Arch National Park and the Gateway Arch Park Foundation.

The Gateway Arch Park Foundation was formed in 2009 to help fund and coordinate the CityArchRiver project, a transformational revamp of the Mississippi Riverfront and Kiener Plaza, right under the iconic arch, that greatly improved public safety and the overall visitor experience.

Since then, the foundation's partnership with the National Park Service has thrived. This is exactly the type of public-private partnership we need across all of our national parks.

As the official philanthropic partner of the park, the foundation hosts several popular events, including Blues at the Arch and Winterfest, both of which draw thousands of visitors and generate significant revenue that is reinvested back into supporting the park.

The bill we are considering today establishes a new pilot program that would allow the foundation to host private events at Gateway Arch National Park.

This will allow the foundation to host more events and potentially generate even more resources to support the ongoing management of the park.

The authority granted by the bill is a powerful tool when used appropriately, but it cannot become an excuse or rationale to supplant or cut funding from the National Park Service or its staff, especially now when the agency is being pushed to the limit by this administration.

Public-private partnerships like this one managed by the Gateway Arch Foundation are essential. They provide critical support through the National Park System, but we must remember that the agency has lost nearly 25 percent of its full-time staff since the beginning of last year. That figure is neither sustainable nor rational.

Expanding partnership tools should not be an excuse to replace the expertise and experience of the dedicated professionals at the National Park Service.

With that context in mind, this bill requires careful guardrails. Thanks to the cooperation of my colleagues across the aisle, H.R. 5254 will allow managers of the Gateway Arch to test out a time-limited authority. The bill includes significant safeguards for National Park Service-sponsored events, cost recovery authority, and robust reporting requirements so we can understand the full scope and impact of this new pilot project.

Allowing a philanthropic partner to have exclusive after-hours access to park facilities will be a unique arrangement within the National Park System. I thank the majority for working with us to ensure it includes the right checks and balances.

Madam Speaker, I also thank my colleague and friend Representative BELL from Missouri for introducing this legislation and advocating for his hometown national park, hopefully creating a blueprint that could be utilized across this country.

While most Americans know about the iconic St. Louis Arch, famously known as the Gateway to the West, not everyone knows about the full history of the site. The park is also home to the Old Courthouse, the site where Dred Scott first tried and unsuccessfully sued for his freedom from slavery.

This is a transformational American story. While President Trump is doing his worst to sanitize American history and remove signs at national parks across the country, boosting its visibility is more important now than ever.

Celebrating 250 years of this great Nation means honoring and acknowledging the progress we have made since the days of the Dred Scott decision, not burying the truth or the full telling of our shared history.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, by creating a time-limited pilot program allowing private philanthropic partners to host events at park facilities, H.R. 5254 creates an innovative new model for improved public access, better visitor experience, and new revenue streams to support park operations.

This bill will create jobs, boost the local economy, and provide new opportunities to celebrate America's 250th birthday at one of the most iconic national park destinations in the Midwest.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5254, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5254, as amended.

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.

NORTH RIM RESTORATION ACT

Mr. WITTMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5729) to authorize direct emergency acquisition flexibilities for the National Park Service for the purpose of retaining, vetting, approving,

and expediting contractor approval for the clearing, rebuilding, maintenance, and improvement of the Grand Canyon grounds that have been impacted by the Dragon Bravo Fire, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5729

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 Rim Restoration Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **COVERED AREA.**—The term "covered area" means the areas within Grand Canyon National Park impacted by the Dragon Bravo Fire.

(2) **SECRETARY.**—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the National Park Service.

SEC. 3. EMERGENCY CONTRACTING AUTHORITY.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Notwithstanding any requirement for a Presidential emergency or disaster declaration, the Secretary is authorized to use the emergency acquisition flexibilities under part 18 of title 48, Code of Federal Regulations (and any successor regulations), including the increased micro-purchase thresholds, simplified acquisition thresholds, and other higher-level emergency flexibilities, in contracting for the following services within the covered area:

(1) Forest management or restoration activities carried out in response to the Dragon Bravo Fire.

(2) Rebuilding, planning, development, and design of structures affected by the Dragon Bravo Fire.

(3) Improvements to the grounds and structures.

(4) Recovery efforts.

(5) Any activity listed in section 4(a).

(b) **PROCESS FOR OTHER SERVICES.**—Unless otherwise provided by law or regulation, the authority granted under subsection (a) does not apply to contracts for services other than those described in paragraphs (1) through (4) of subsection (a).

(c) **REPORT.**—Not later than 180 days after the Secretary begins to use the authorization under subsection (a), and every 180 days thereafter until the date that is 180 days after the date described in subsection (e), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Natural Resources and Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committees on Energy and Natural Resources and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report on all expenditures related to the recovery efforts for the Dragon Bravo Fire, including the following:

(1) The expected cost of recovery efforts.

(2) Cost expenditures.

(3) Cost overruns.

(4) Identification of contractors performing the work associated with the recovery from the Dragon Bravo Fire.

(5) Any affiliations or conflicts of interest between the contractor and the contracting office at the Grand Canyon National Park or the National Park Service.

(6) Any waste, fraud, or abuse detected during the recovery efforts.

(7) Any contracts that came in under expected expenses.

(8) An estimated time of completion for all projects and full recovery efforts related to the Dragon Bravo Fire.

(9) If an extension is needed for this authority to complete projects associated with the Dragon Bravo Fire.

(d) **EXTENSION.**—If, after the date of the enactment of this Act, a new wildfire ignites within the covered area and impacts recovery efforts

related to the Dragon Bravo Fire, the Secretary may request a 12-month extension of the authority granted under subsection (a), subject to congressional approval.

(e) **EXPIRATION.**—The authority granted under subsection (a) shall expire on the date that is the earlier of the following:

(1) 7 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) The date on which projects and recovery efforts within the covered area are completed, as determined by the Secretary.

SEC. 4. LIMITED SOLE-SOURCE PROCUREMENT AUTHORITY.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Notwithstanding chapter 33 of title 41, United States Code, or any other provision of law relating to the use of competitive procedures for the procurement of services, supplies, or construction materials and services, subject to a determination made by the Secretary under subsection (b), the Secretary may enter into one or more contracts, on a non-competitive basis, for the planning, design, repair, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, stabilization, replacement, or operation of assets supporting the recovery and reopening of the Grand Canyon National Park North Rim, including—

(1) employee housing and related facilities;

(2) water, wastewater, power, communications, and other utility systems;

(3) visitor-facing facilities and infrastructure, including lodging, food service, retail, transportation, and associated public-use facilities; and

(4) maintenance, administration, and other back-of-house assets necessary for safe and continuous operation of North Rim services.

(b) **DETERMINATION REQUIRED.**—The Secretary may utilize the authority provided in subsection (a) if the Secretary determines, in writing, that—

(1) the concessioner currently holding a valid concession contract for operations at the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park on the date of enactment of this Act is uniquely positioned to execute one or more procurement contracts identified under subsection (a) due to the concessioner's current operational responsibilities, site access, integration with existing concession infrastructure, or continuity needs essential to expedited North Rim recovery; and

(2) use of noncompetitive procedures under subsection (a) with this concessioner is necessary to ensure public health and safety, protection of park resources, or continuity of essential services.

(c) **EXPIRATION.**—The authority granted under subsection (a) shall expire on the date that is 7 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

(d) **RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING CONCESSION CONTRACT.**—Any procurement action conducted or contract awarded under this section shall be considered separate from, and shall not modify, amend, or extend the duration of, or provide any leasehold surrender interest or other benefit, under a concession contract issued under section 101913 of title 54, United States Code, or related authorities.

(e) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this section shall be construed to—

(1) authorize the award of any concession contract or lease without full compliance with applicable concession contracting law; or

(2) prevent the Secretary from using competitive procedures if the Secretary determines such procedures to be in the best interest of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) and the gentleman from Maryland (Ms. ELFRETH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.