

not always right, but also everybody should have their day in court, including the victims.

At a time when we have seen Big Brother bloated beyond belief in terms of budget and in terms of power, the last thing we should do is to look for further ways to aggrandize the power of the executive branch at this point.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the question before us is a simple one. Should an alien who is here in this country as a guest of America be deported if they commit fraud and steal the funds of American families and American taxpayers or if they commit identity theft by stealing the Social Security numbers of American citizens?

That should not be a difficult question for anyone with a lick of common sense. We have enough problems with domestic criminals without tolerating the presence of criminals from every other country in the world.

If a person is a foreigner and commits fraud in this country, they need to go home and never be allowed to return. The Democrats want these criminals to stay. The Republicans want them to go. I don't wonder for a moment where the American people stand.

President Trump put a very simple and revealing proposition to the Democrats during his recent State of the Union Address. The first duty of the American Government is to defend the American people and not illegal aliens.

The Democrats made their answer crystal clear for the entire world to see. I am willing to bet they haven't learned a thing since then, but I am pleased to put that proposition to them today in this form. Should foreigners who commit fraud against the American people be allowed to stay in our country, "yes" or "no"?

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1115, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. RASKIN. 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 question will be postponed.

□ 1420

PROTECTING ACCESS FOR HUNTERS AND ANGLERS ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1115, I call up the bill (H.R. 556) to prohibit the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture from prohibiting the use of lead ammunition or tackle on certain Federal land or water under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1115, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Natural Resources, printed in the bill, is adopted and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 556

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 "Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act".

SEC. 2. PROTECTING ACCESS FOR HUNTERS AND ANGLERS ON FEDERAL LAND AND WATER.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in section 20.21 or 20.108 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act), and subsection (b), the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service or the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, and the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service (referred to in this section as the "applicable Secretary"), may not—

(1) prohibit the use of lead ammunition or tackle on Federal land or water that is—

(A) under the jurisdiction of the applicable Secretary; and

(B) made available for hunting or fishing activities; or

(2) issue regulations relating to the level of lead in ammunition or tackle to be used on Federal land or water described in paragraph (1).

(b) EXCEPTION.—Subsection (a) shall not apply to a prohibition or regulations described in that subsection that are limited to a specific unit of Federal land or water, if the applicable Secretary determines that—

(1) a decline in wildlife population at the specific unit of Federal land or water is primarily caused by the use of lead in ammunition or tackle, based on the field data from the specific unit of Federal land or water; and

(2) the prohibition or regulations, as applicable, are—

(A) consistent with the law of the State in which the specific Federal land or water is located;

(B) consistent with an applicable policy of the fish and wildlife department of the State in which the specific Federal land or water is located; or

(C) approved by the applicable fish and wildlife department of the State in which the specific Federal land or water is located.

(c) FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE.—The applicable Secretary shall include in a Federal Register notice with respect to any prohibition or regulations that meet the requirements of paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (b) an explanation of how the prohibition or regulations, as applicable, meet those requirements.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill, as amended, shall be debatable for 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Natural Resources or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) each will control 30 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. 556.

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 strong support of H.R. 556, sponsored by my colleague, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN).

This commonsense bill protects hunters' and anglers' ability to continue using cost-effective lead ammunition and fishing equipment on our Federal lands. At the same time, this legislation gives land management agencies the flexibility to make targeted decisions on lead usage based on sound science and in coordination with State fish and wildlife agencies.

In the United States, sportsmen and -women participation is crucial to the success of wildlife conservation. The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation operates on seven interdependent principles. Embedded in these principles are sound science, active management, and access to hunting and fishing.

The success of this model is best characterized by the millions of dollars that hunters and anglers pay for wildlife conservation each year, mainly through excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, and fishing tackle.

In fiscal year 2026, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service apportioned over \$800 million in receipts from excise taxes on firearms manufacturers alone. Of that, nearly \$700 million was for wildlife restoration. Similarly, \$442 million was generated from excise taxes on fishing equipment for fish conservation.

It was with this in mind that the Trump administration changed the paradigm for hunting and fishing on Federal lands earlier this year.

Historically, Federal lands were considered closed to hunting and fishing unless specific regulations were issued to allow these activities in certain places. With the signing of Secretarial Order No. 3447 by Secretary Burgum, Federal lands are now considered to be open for hunting and fishing unless existing authorities and unit purposes require an area to be closed.

This change charts a path forward toward opening thousands of acres of

Federal land through responsible hunting and fishing. This new approach will result in greater economic activity for local communities surrounding our Federal lands and more funding for wildlife and habitat conservation.

H.R. 556 will further these goals by ensuring that Federal land management agencies follow specific science and coordinate with State agencies when regulating the use of lead ammunition and fishing tackle.

Providing these safeguards is critical, as alternatives to lead ammunition and fishing tackle are often cost prohibitive, with some costing as much as 10 times more than similar lead products. Instead of regulating hunters and anglers out of our Federal lands, the Trump administration is working with State managers, conservation organizations, and sportsmen and -women.

When lead is shown to cause harm to wildlife, it will be addressed accordingly, but wide-reaching bans or even refuge-by-refuge bans, where no specific science link can be made, are the wrong approach and ultimately undermine wildlife conservation.

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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC, October 6, 2025.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: This letter confirms our mutual understanding regarding H.R. 556, the "Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2025." Thank you for collaborating with the Committee on Agriculture on the matters within our jurisdiction.

The Committee on Agriculture will forego any further consideration of this bill. However, by foregoing consideration at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over any subject matter contained in this or similar legislation. The Committee on Agriculture also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees, should it become necessary, and ask that you support such a request.

We would appreciate a response to this letter confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 556 and request a copy of our letters on this matter be published in the Congressional Record during Floor consideration.

Sincerely,
GLENN "GT" THOMPSON,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC, October 7, 2025.

Hon. GLENN THOMPSON,
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: I write regarding H.R. 556, the "Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2025," which was ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources on July 15, 2025.

I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Agriculture and appreciate your willingness to forgo further consideration of the bill. I acknowledge that the Committee on Agriculture will not formally consider H.R. 556 and agree that the inaction

of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained therein.

I am pleased to support your request to name members of the Committee on Agriculture to any conference committee to consider such provisions. I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the bill and will include such letters in the committee report on H.R. 556. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation.

Sincerely,
BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Chairman.

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

Mr. Speaker, we are on day 19 of Trump's illegal war of choice with Iran. So far, 13 American servicemembers are dead, and 200 more are wounded. Gas prices have surged 80 cents a gallon just in the last 3 weeks. Grocery bills are climbing. Oil is over \$100 a barrel. The Strait of Hormuz is effectively closed.

Mr. Speaker, what is it, in the face of this chaos and calamity, that the United States House of Representatives has chosen to do this week: debate a bill about lead ammunition in our Nation's wildlife refuges.

Mr. Speaker, we should consider the iconic national symbol of the bald eagle when we talk about this subject. Every year, bald eagles across America die. They drop out of the sky in some cases because they ate carcasses and remains that were laced with lead fragments.

Bald eagles are not alone. Lead poisoning has been documented in over 130 species: the common loon, condors, trumpeter swans, many species of ducks, and even some mammals. For species already struggling on the brink of extinction, each piece of spent ammunition or lost fishing tackle left in the environment is another potential lethal dose of lead.

We banned lead from gasoline. We banned it from paint. We banned it from children's toys. We did that because lead is a known lethal neurotoxin that never breaks down.

That same lead in the form of spent ammunition or lost fishing tackle can kill wildlife, and it does so on our public lands and waters right now, in some cases at levels that are far too high.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans are proposing a bill that would make this a lot worse. H.R. 556 would block Federal land managers from using common-sense, science-based safeguards, when necessary, to protect wildlife from lead poisoning on Federal lands and waters.

The bill does have an exception, at least technically or hypothetically. Agencies can act when a species decline is "primarily caused" by lead. That evidentiary requirement and the standard that goes with it, the way this bill is written, is going to be impossible to meet.

The bill demands site-specific field data for each individual unit of land, ignoring decades of peer-reviewed science and imposing costs that most

land units, already stretched thin by Trump's budget cuts, simply cannot afford.

States are already moving to protect wildlife in many cases. Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont banned lead tackle to protect loon populations. California banned lead ammunition to protect the California condor. However, this bill creates a very murky legal landscape that would undermine these safeguards, replacing State laws and policies with a Federal mandate written by and for the gun lobby.

Most concerning, this bill claims to protect access for hunters and anglers. Yet, in reality, the bill could result in less access for some of America's biggest conservationists. The legislation conflicts with the Endangered Species Act and with a 2022 settlement governing hunting and fishing in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Mr. Speaker, even under the Trump administration, the Fish and Wildlife Service issued targeted lead restrictions in eight refuges, specifically to open new hunting and fishing opportunities near sensitive Endangered Species Act-listed wildlife species.

Yet, if this bill is enacted, the Fish and Wildlife Service would have to close those sensitive areas for hunting and fishing entirely to comply with the ESA. That is going to leave hunters and anglers with fewer places to fish and hunt.

Transitioning away from lead is a step toward a more sustainable future for the sport. We saw this in 1991 when the Federal Government phased out lead shot for duck hunting. The gun lobby said at the time all the same things that it is saying now: This will kill the sport. People will be priced out. It will be the end of a way of life.

It was nonsense. It was wrong in every case. Waterfowl populations rebounded, giving duck hunters more opportunities, more birds, and more places to hunt.

□ 1430

Proponents of this bill often claim banning lead will price out hunters and anglers, but the data tells a very different story. An analysis of 86 different bullet calibers and cartridge sizes found no significant price difference between lead-free and lead-core ammunition in popular calibers.

Switching to non-lead tackle can add less than 1 percent to the average angler's total annual cost. In the handful of refuges that do restrict lead to protect endangered species and to make sure that they can continue hunting and fishing, the Fish and Wildlife Service already offers vouchers and programs providing free or low-cost ammunition and tackle to hunters and anglers.

Congress should always remember that our public lands belong to the American people, not to the NRA and the gun lobby. H.R. 556 imposes a Federal mandate to allow the spread of a known lethal toxin across our Nation's

wildlife refuges, waterways, and the habitats that our children will inherit.

My colleagues must reject this bill and let public land managers make the tough calls and do their jobs.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN), the vice chairman of the Committee on Natural Resources and the lead sponsor of this legislation.

Before he takes his 3 minutes, I will mention that Mr. WITTMAN is not only an active member of our committee, serving as vice chairman, and the lead sponsor of this bill, but Mr. WITTMAN also holds degrees in biology and public health and policy. I could actually call him Dr. WITTMAN, with a Ph.D. He is also an avid outdoorsman. If there ever was an expert in this area, I would consider Representative WITTMAN an expert.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 556, the Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act. This legislation safeguards the rights of sportsmen and -women who play such a critical role in the conservation of our lands and resources across our Nation.

As a lifelong hunter and recreational fisherman, I know firsthand how important access to our public lands and waters is for America's sportsmen and -women.

Hunters and anglers are some of the Nation's most dedicated conservationists. They care deeply about the lands, and they demonstrate that. Through the license fees that they pay, the excise taxes that they pay, and on-the-ground stewardship, they have helped fund wildlife management and habitat conservation for generations and have been responsible stewards of the land.

Unfortunately, in recent years, we have seen efforts to restrict the use of traditional lead ammunition and fishing tackle on Federal lands and waters, policies that would have placed unnecessary burdens on sportsmen and -women and limited the access to these outdoor traditions that are so fundamental to what Americans cherish.

I appreciate the Trump administration and Secretary Burgum for taking action through a Secretarial order to address this issue and protect access for hunters and anglers, those true stewards of the great resources that are part of this Nation.

This legislation builds on that effort by codifying these protections in law, ensuring that future administrations cannot impose sweeping restrictions that are not grounded in science or consistent with State wildlife management authority.

The Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act ensures that any future restrictions on lead ammunition or tackle on Federal lands and waters must be supported by sound science and aligned with State law. Let me re-

peat that again. Counter to the gentleman from California's statement, this requires a demonstration of sound science in coordination with State management agencies.

State wildlife management agencies have primacy in managing the resources in their States, and Congress should make sure that we honor the regulations and requirements that they put in place to make sure that hunters and anglers have access to the resources that belong to them. These resources belong to the citizens of the United States of America, everyone, not just a group that says, no, we want to restrict access, or we want to use pseudoscience to say that there is a threat here, or we want to state that a species that is actually on the road to recovery is somehow threatened or endangered.

My colleagues can mislead, but the American people aren't going to fall for that. The American people understand what this is about, and that is allowing them to have access to the lands that they own and to the resources that belong to all of us. That is what makes this Nation great.

States have long been the primary managers of fish and wildlife. That is their responsibility, and they are best positioned to make decisions that balance conservation with continued access for hunters and anglers. Congress should respect the States. The 10th Amendment tells us to do so.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, this legislation will also help ensure that participation in these outdoor traditions remains affordable, which means they will be accessible.

Republicans want to reduce barriers that could prevent the next generation of sportsmen and -women from getting involved. The young folks of today want to be a part of the outdoors. Let's make sure we don't stop that.

I was proud to see this bill pass the House last Congress, and I remain committed to advancing it once again so that it can be sent to the Senate and, ultimately, to President Trump's desk.

Protecting access for hunters and anglers means protecting the conservation model that has sustained America's wildlife and public lands for decades.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of points. First of all, Federal wildlife managers under current law already have to follow the best available science. If they were to issue lead ammunition regulations randomly, arbitrarily, in a way that contravenes science, they would find themselves immediately in court, and those actions would be overturned.

In terms of deference to State law and State wildlife managers, I cer-

tainly agree with the gentleman on that. The problem is that many States have actually taken steps to restrict lead ammunition and tackle. This bill is so poorly written that it is not clear whether Federal wildlife managers could continue to comply with those State laws or whether they would have to ignore them and continue to allow lead in those cases.

Those are several reasons why this bill, in addition to the policy problems I have highlighted, is technically not ready for prime time.

Mr. Speaker, at this point, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL).

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, as a former chair and proud member of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, I have worked tirelessly to defend our public lands and wildlife for the benefit of all outdoor enthusiasts. I am here today on the floor to continue to fight for healthy wildlife populations and to protect public lands access for our Nation's hunters and fishers.

I have been warning my colleagues for years that this legislation, as written, will undermine science-based conservation of wildlife and will result in closures of areas to hunting and fishing.

The fact is that when land managers are allowed to follow the best available science, restrictions on lead ammunition and tackle can be used as a tool to expand access for hunters and fishers, not limit it. This is especially important in places like national wildlife refuges, where managers must ensure that hunting and fishing activities are compatible with the refuge's purposes, including safeguarding threatened and endangered species.

Even last fall, I saw new hunting and fishing opportunities combined with restrictions on lead. The Trump administration's 2025 hunt-fish rule combined these limited lead regulations for new hunting and fishing opportunities with its Lead-Free Hunting Voluntary Incentive Program.

For example, at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, they combined a new opportunity for lead-free bear hunting with a program that distributed all needed lead-free ammunition to hunters.

The bill as currently written undermines that effort by requiring costly and unworkable unit-specific analysis before any regulation on lead can be proposed. In many cases, this bureaucratic burden in H.R. 556 may cause entire units to be closed to hunting or fishing.

From an administrative perspective, it is less risky to remain in compliance with the ESA and the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act by closing units to hunting and fishing than to navigate the complex process required by this bill.

Meanwhile, wildlife populations are under increasing pressure from a range

of stressors, including habitat loss, disease, and climate change. Lead contamination often contributes to population decline alongside these other factors, and waiting until lead becomes the primary cause of harm means we are acting too late.

That is why, at the appropriate time, I will offer a motion to recommit this bill back to committee.

If House rules permitted, I would have offered the motion with an important amendment to the bill.

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

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from Michigan.

□ 1440

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, my amendment ensures that land managers can make science-based decisions to protect both wildlife and hunting opportunities so they don't face a choice between keeping lands open to hunting and fishing or protecting wildlife.

As someone who strongly supports our hunters and anglers, I want these activities to remain sustainable and accessible for future generations. Hunters and anglers are among conservation's greatest champions, and they deserve our support.

Grounding conservation and recreation in sound science supports both the natural resources we value and the outdoor traditions we cherish.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of my amendment in the RECORD immediately prior to the vote on the motion to recommit.

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

There was no objection.

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for the motion to recommit that will protect our Nation's rich wildlife heritage for future generations.

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

I will point out that H.R. 556 checks the boxes. It allows State agencies to make the rules on what kind of ammunition is being used. It also allows for the best available science.

It has been argued almost like the science totally supports the ban of lead, but I want to read from a quote from the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, who is actually the lead advocate for all State fish and wildlife agencies here in Washington:

On the Biden administration's proposal to ban lead, I am quoting what they testified:

Without definitive science conclusively and fully documenting population-level impacts, we do not believe there is sufficient evidence to support these mandates.

What the people closest to this issue said was that there is no conclusive science that we should ban lead, yet

that is what the previous administration wanted to do and not only on fish and wildlife refuges. They wanted to ban it not only for hunting but also for fishing.

Fishing and hunting are sports that people in my district do that maybe can't afford to do a lot of other activities. When you increase the cost of ammunition or the cost of fishing tackle by a factor of 10, you are going to price people out of that sport.

Going back to my opening comments, hunters and fishermen are the ones who fund conservation in America through excise taxes, and a lot of that comes from ammunition and fishing tackle.

What this would do is force more people out of those sports. It would reduce funding for conservation, and it would create a downward spiral.

We need to use common sense. We need to use thorough, science-based research, and we need to be able to make these decisions as they arise.

We are not preventing lead from being banned. We are not saying that you can go back and use lead to hunt waterfowl and migratory species. We are just saying to these fish and wildlife agencies, for certain game, you can still use lead shot. We are not going to allow that to be banned just because somebody has a political agenda to ban it.

This is a commonsense bill. It is good for hunting and fishing. It is good for hunters and fishermen, and it is ultimately good for our country and conservation. I strongly support it, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

About this best available science, just to be very clear, best available science is what wildlife managers have to do right now. If they don't, any regulation that they promulgate involving lead tackle or lead ammunition restrictions is going to be invalidated and will mean nothing.

What this poorly written legislation would do, though, is substitute a brand-new scientific standard that we have never seen. We have no idea what it really means. It would have a narrow exception to allow restrictions on lead ammunition or tackle on specific units of land if the applicable Secretary determines that: "A decline in wildlife population at the specific unit of Federal land or water is primarily caused by the use of lead in ammunition or tackle, based on the field data from the specific unit of the Federal land or water."

These are very new and ambiguous terms. A simple reading would suggest you have to do a complete forensic analysis that would, in the real world, make this standard totally unattainable. It would effectively mean you would never be able to regulate lead ammunition or tackle, even when it was forcing the closure of hunting and fishing in our National Wildlife Refuge System.

As the National Wildlife Refuge Association has pointed out, this is an impossible standard because population monitoring data is not available at the unit scale in most cases.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot today about hunters and anglers, but let's talk about what this bill actually does.

First, it is bad for wildlife. It strips our land managers of the tools they need to limit lead, a known neurotoxin, on our public lands and waters, putting the recovery of species like the bald eagle, our national symbol, and the California condor at great risk of further loss and potentially extinction. We cannot claim to support wildlife while handcuffing the people tasked with managing it.

My colleagues across the aisle talk constantly about States' rights and keeping the Federal Government out of local decisions. Then they bring a bill like this that amounts to a Federal mandate preempting, overriding, State laws on behalf of the gun lobby.

Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and California have already banned lead ammunition or tackle in some cases to limit lead and protect wildlife. This bill would throw all of that into legal limbo. Land managers wouldn't even know whether they can honor these State laws.

This bill also harms the very people it claims to champion: our hunters and anglers. It creates a direct conflict with the Endangered Species Act in ways that would force the Fish and Wildlife Service to close off public lands currently open to fishing and hunting.

It does all of this for a problem that doesn't even exist. Lead-free alternatives are widely available and cost about the same in most cases for the most popular calibers. They have been working since 1991. Fewer places to hunt and fish does not grow the outdoor economy, and the places that have sensibly restricted lead tackle and ammunition have not seen a reduction in hunting and fishing.

The people who actually use these lands—our hunters, anglers, and families—are among the strongest conservationists in this country. We agree on that. The last thing they need is for Congress to do favors for the gun lobby at the expense of these lands and wildlife that they love.

We banned lead from gasoline, from paint, and from children's toys. I don't think anyone in this Chamber would argue for putting lead back in any of those circumstances, but House Republicans are asking us, through this bill, to guarantee the sacred place of lead in our wildlife refuges. The people and the wildlife who depend on healthy public lands would pay the price for that.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to see this bill for what it is, a step backward for our environment and our economy, and vote "no" on H.R. 556.

I yield back the balance of my time. Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

Hunters and anglers are the backbone of American wildlife conservation efforts, and they are heavily invested in the long-term health of wildlife. It is important that Congress come to their defense against ideologically driven, unscientific decisions that limit access to our Federal public lands.

Mr. Speaker, I have a letter here supporting H.R. 556. I want to read some of the names who signed onto this letter before I ask to include it in the RECORD.

These are organizations like the American Catfishing Association, American Sportfishing Association, Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, Boone and Crockett Club, California Waterfowl Association, Catch-A-Dream Foundation, Coastal Conservation Association, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports, Dallas Safari Club, Delta Waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited, International Game Fish Association, Major League Fishing, Mule Deer Foundation, National Deer Association, National Professional Anglers Association, National Rifle Association, National Shooting Sports Foundation, Pheasants Forever, Public Lands Foundation, Quail Forever, Safari Club International, Sportsmen's Alliance, The Bass Federation, The Walleye Federation, Whitetails Unlimited, and Wildlife Forever.

□ 1450

These organizations represent millions of Americans who participate in outdoor recreation through hunting and fishing. I don't think they would be signing a letter encouraging the passage of H.R. 556 if they thought there was something that would endanger our fish and wildlife populations in this bill.

Again, to be clear, this bill doesn't prevent the Federal Government from making decisions regarding the use of lead ammunition and fishing tackle, but it does say that any ban must be backed up by site-specific science demonstrating that lead use is harming wildlife in that refuge.

It also requires that States be properly consulted when the Federal Government proposes to ban the use of lead. I believe that a true partnership between States and the Federal Government in wildlife conservation is the best path forward, and this bill is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I include this letter I just mentioned in the RECORD.

MARCH 16, 2026.

HON. MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER JOHNSON: The undersigned organizations, representing millions of hunters, anglers, wildlife professionals, and outdoor enthusiasts, write to express support for the Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act (H.R. 556). Introduced by Congressman Rob Wittman, this legislation would prohibit the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior from restricting the use of lead ammunition or tackle on certain federal lands and waters absent field data dem-

onstrating a science-based link to wildlife population declines. Overly broad or arbitrary bans on traditional ammunition and tackle can create unnecessary economic impacts and hinder fish and wildlife conservation efforts. We respectfully urge prompt House consideration of this legislation.

Fish and wildlife are generally managed at the population level, and—with limited exceptions—management authority primarily resides with state fish and wildlife agencies. In the rare cases where credible field data demonstrate impacts to wildlife populations, state agencies already have the authority to regulate ammunition or tackle use to achieve conservation objectives while minimizing impacts on hunters and anglers.

Wildlife management decisions should be guided by science and the expertise of professional wildlife managers—not political motivations, litigation, or ballot initiatives. Restrictions on traditional ammunition and tackle on federal lands should occur only with the support of the relevant state fish and wildlife agency. H.R. 556 appropriately reinforces this principle and affirms the central role of states in wildlife management.

Broad bans can also discourage participation in hunting and fishing, particularly when comparable alternatives are not widely available at similar cost or performance. Reduced participation has economic consequences and directly affects conservation funding. Through excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, and fishing tackle under the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts, hunters and anglers provide the primary source of funding for state wildlife conservation, habitat restoration, research, and public access.

At the same time, we support efforts by federal agencies to responsibly expand opportunities for hunting and fishing on public lands. We commend the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for proposing to expand hunting and sport fishing opportunities across units of the National Wildlife Refuge System and National Fish Hatchery System. Increasing access supports the Refuge System's mission to facilitate compatible wildlife-dependent recreation while strengthening participation in the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

For these reasons, we strongly support the Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act (H.R. 556) and encourage the House to advance this legislation. We also appreciate ongoing agency efforts to maintain and expand opportunities for America's hunters and anglers on public lands.

Thank you for your leadership and continued service on behalf of America's outdoor heritage.

Sincerely,

American Catfishing Association, American Sportfishing Association, Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, Boone and Crockett Club, California Waterfowl Association, Catch A Dream Foundation, Coastal Conservation Association, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports, Dallas Safari Club, Delta Waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited, International Game Association, Major League Fishing.

Mule Deer Foundation, National Deer Association, National Professional Anglers Association, National Rifle Association, National Shooting Sports Foundation, Pheasants Forever, Public Lands Foundation, Quail Forever, Safari Club International, Sportsmen's Alliance, The Bass Federation, The Walleye Federation, Whitetails Unlimited, Wildlife Forever.

Mr. WESTERMAN. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I, again, thank Congressman WITTMAN for his leadership in working

on this legislation. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1115, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mrs. Dingell of Michigan moves to recommit the bill H.R. 556 to the Committee on Natural Resources.

The material previously referred to by Mrs. DINGELL is as follows:

Mrs. Dingell moves to recommit the bill H.R. 556 to the Committee on Natural Resources with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith, with the following amendment:

Page 4, strike lines 5 through 9.

Page 4, after line 4, insert the following:

(1) based on the best available science, the use of lead in ammunition or tackle may contribute to the decline of a fish or wildlife population within that unit;

Page 4, line 21, strike "located." and insert "located; and".

Page 4, after line 21, insert the following:

(3) the prohibition or regulations, as applicable, will allow for hunting or fishing in areas that would otherwise be closed to hunting or fishing in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws.

Page 4, line 25, strike "paragraphs (1) and (2)" and insert "paragraphs (1) through (3)".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XIX, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Mrs. DINGELL. 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 question are postponed.

COMMUNICATION FROM CHAIR OF HOUSE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Chair of the House Republican Conference:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 18, 2026.

Hon. MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker, The Capitol,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to clause 5(b)(1) of Rule X, I am writing to inform you