

The investigative subcommittee, in the matter of Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick, repeatedly sought documents and testimony from Mr. Roos, who was a key witness in the matter. Yet Mr. Roos failed to comply with voluntary requests for information and multiple subpoenas in the 118th and 119th Congresses.

While other witnesses did not fully cooperate with the committee's investigation, Mr. Roos' conduct went further. He simply ignored multiple subpoenas without asserting any valid legal privilege or basis for noncompliance.

Despite his later claims that he affirmatively reached out to the committee after he was contacted about his noncompliance, Mr. Roos never communicated to an email address belonging to any staff, and he failed to respond to numerous emails and phone calls at the points of contact where he claims to have been reachable.

The bipartisan subcommittee unanimously found, and the full committee agreed, that his conduct unnecessarily and significantly delayed the committee's investigation and was thus worthy of a referral for criminal contempt proceedings.

Compliance with the Ethics Committee subpoenas is not optional, as I have said before. This contempt resolution is meant to demonstrate to witnesses before the committee that obstructive conduct has consequences, and the committee will vigorously use all the tools at its disposal to thoroughly and swiftly investigate allegations of misconduct.

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

Mr. GUEST. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional witnesses and am prepared to close.

Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules to agree to the resolution printed in House Report 119-694 regarding proceedings against Hector Roos. I urge its adoption, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. GUEST) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1505.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NORTHEAST LOBSTERMAN PROTECTION ACT OF 2026

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1499, I call up the bill (H.R. 9436) to amend the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 to extend the time period for which certain regulations concerning the North Atlantic right whale are effective, 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 1499, in lieu of the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Natural Resources, printed in the bill, an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 119-40 is adopted and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

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

H.R. 9436

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 "Northeast Lobsterman Protection Act of 2026".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF CERTAIN REGULATIONS CONCERNING NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE.

Section 101 of division JJ of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (16 U.S.C. 1387 note) is amended by striking "2028" each place it appears and inserting "2035".

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOST). 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 now recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN).

□ 1530

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 9436.

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. 9436, the Northeast Lobsterman Protection Act, which will protect one of the world's most iconic fisheries and the American jobs, communities, and families that depend on it.

In Maine, lobster accounts for 75 percent of the total value of the State's commercial fisheries, supporting an estimated \$2 billion in economic activity and 17,500 jobs.

While critical to the State's economy, a robust lobster industry isn't just about dollars and cents. It is about individuals, families, and communities whose stories and traditions are directly tied to this industry that has operated for more than 70 years.

However, Maine lobstermen have faced tremendous adversity over the past several decades. The American lobster fishery has been under attack from radical groups determined to end

this way of life. These serial litigants have pushed for a regulatory regime that could shut down the entire fishery.

For nearly 30 years, the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team has overseen the Maine lobster and Jonah crab fisheries. They have implemented and updated a take reduction plan with extensive regulatory requirements designed to minimize the fishery's impact on North Atlantic right whales. What they are doing is working. For decades, the industry has led conservation efforts to reduce right whale entanglements in their gear.

Despite the American lobster fishery virtually eliminating its impact on right whales, the take reduction plan has faced repeated litigation, leaving the industry subject to regulatory whiplash. The American lobster fishery has been subject to four different biological opinions between 2010 and 2021, with ever more draconian restrictions.

When the National Marine Fisheries Service issued its most recent biological opinion in 2021, unsurprisingly, the radical groups remained dissatisfied and continued to litigate. At the same time, Maine's Democratic Governor, Janet Mills, and the lobster industry argued that NOAA failed to utilize the best available science.

Facing new regulations that threatened to shut down the entire fishery, the Maine delegation worked on a bipartisan basis in December 2022 to enact a regulatory pause for the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries. This pause provided ESA and MMPA coverage for the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries through 2028, providing the State and the industry more time to develop new gear innovations, prudent conservation measures, and conduct more research on the fishery's interactions with right whales.

Since then, the State of Maine, the industry, and other scientific and research bodies have made progress, investing more than \$90 million in research. However, it is clear that more time is needed to gather the necessary data and incorporate it into final regulations. Representative LAWLER's bill would provide MMPA and ESA coverage for these fisheries through 2035, providing the necessary time to get these regulations right without the threat of more frivolous litigation.

I thank Representative LAWLER for carrying this legislation, and also I recognize the gentleman from Maine, Representative JARED GOLDEN, for his tireless leadership on this issue.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Congress returned yesterday from a long district work period where most of us heard a lot of things from our constituents. They told us about the grinding cost of groceries, gas, and healthcare and the instability their small businesses face

thanks to President Trump's trade war with Canada.

What is the House majority prioritizing this week?

It is a bill that will push a critically endangered whale closer to extinction. I don't think many of us heard this as a priority from our constituents.

H.R. 9436 would extend the regulatory pause on North Atlantic right whale protections from fishing gear entanglements through 2035. This bill sells our fishing communities a false promise. We may hear that kicking the can down the road saves the Maine lobster fleet. In reality, this bill would lock in a broken status quo that guarantees disaster for both our historic coastal industry and the critically endangered right whale.

Right now, fewer than 380 North Atlantic right whales remain on Earth, with only 70 breeding females. Over 85 percent have experienced at least one fishing gear entanglement, and since 2022, at least 31 whales have suffered severe injuries or death because of entanglements.

In late 2022, Congress inappropriately paused all additional measures to protect these whales from fishing gear entanglements until 2029. This pause was advertised as a stakeholders' window of opportunity to give NOAA time to partner with fishermen, States, and technology companies to gather data to test and deploy safer fishing gear, namely, ropeless gear.

Instead, that pause becomes a license for complacency.

NOAA is lying down on the job, dragging its feet, firing staff, axing science, and deprioritizing ropeless gear, perhaps because they think Congress will bail them out and kick the can a little further down the road. All of this is illegal, and all of it is causing massive uncertainty for the lobster fishery.

Now, 2 years ahead of the deadline, this bill would add another 7-year delay.

Instead of holding NOAA accountable, House Republicans want to freeze action until 2035, abandoning accountability and setting up our fishermen for failure. The solution already exists. On-demand ropeless gear reduces deadly entanglements of whales without sacrificing catch. We can have this fishing industry. We can protect it for the long haul with this win-win solution. Fishermen are actively testing and using ropeless gear right now. They have landed over 1 million pounds of seafood using these methods.

This bill, though, would destroy the market incentives to deploy these safer and innovative technologies, damaging consumer confidence in the environmental sustainability of American seafood. It would unfairly place greater conservation burdens on the other Atlantic coast communities, from Florida to Maine, who are actively trying to do their part to save this whale from extinction.

Mr. Speaker, let's stop pretending that House Republicans and this ad-

ministration care about the fishermen, coastal communities, or these iconic whales. If Congress can arbitrarily grant a decade-plus statutory exemption to bypass protections for a critically endangered species, then the Endangered Species Act is reduced to a hollow success.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to fight for strong, sustainable fisheries and to defend Federal wildlife protection laws, reject this dangerous precedent, and vote "no" on H.R. 9436.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAWLER), who is the lead sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 9436, the Northeast Lobsterman Protection Act.

I want to thank Chairman WESTERMAN for working with me to bring this bill to the floor, as well as my colleague from Maine who has fought tirelessly on behalf of his constituents, JARED GOLDEN.

In Maine alone, the lobster industry generates approximately \$2 billion in economic activity each year and supports more than 17,500 jobs. Local industries like this one are a lifeline for families and communities that have been in business for generations. In New York, the fishing industry generates more than \$2 billion in economic activity and supports over 10,000 jobs.

For decades, the Northeast lobster and commercial fishing industries have faced growing regulatory pressure as Federal efforts to protect the endangered North Atlantic right whale have unintentionally impacted fisheries. In 2022, this important industry faced the prospect of even more regulations that would have had devastating consequences on fishermen's livelihoods and their local communities that depend on them.

Congress responded by temporarily pausing the regulations and providing funding to improve North Atlantic whale research. That research is already producing better data, but more work remains.

My bill would simply extend the current regulatory pause through 2035, giving the scientific community more than enough additional time to develop durable science-driven solutions that protect the North Atlantic right whale while ensuring American fishermen can continue to do their jobs.

The Northeast lobster fishery is an important part of our coastal economy, supporting not only fishermen but also the processors, restaurants, and local businesses.

Fishermen have spent years adapting to changing conservation requirements and implementing measures to reduce the risk of whale entanglements. They deserve regulatory stability and certainty rather than constantly shifting requirements that threaten their ability to operate and plan for the future.

This legislation is about giving American fishermen the certainty they

need to keep their businesses operating while also giving scientists and the industry the time to create innovative solutions to protect both the North Atlantic right whale and the future of Northeast fisheries.

□ 1540

We all have industries back home that shape our communities. I am not from Maine, but I know the importance of local economies and the individual people who work hard for their families. I will always fight for small businesses and for the New Yorkers back home who show up every day to keep them going.

This is a perfect example of bipartisanship and the willingness to work together for our constituents, for our communities, and to support commonsense legislation that protects the very people we were sent here to represent.

I will also say that I refuse to be intimidated by the activists and organizations, like the NRDC, which is threatening to spend millions of dollars in political spending right now—

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. LAWLER.—attacking me for standing up and working to protect jobs and support commonsense, bipartisan legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

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

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter from more than 30 community environmental and civic leaders in New York and New Jersey urging Congress to defend science-based management of the North Atlantic right whale and opposing this legislation.

AUGUST 31, 2026.

DEAR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: As community, environmental, and civic leaders based in New York and New Jersey, we write to express our strong opposition to H.R. 9436. This legislation would delay urgently needed protections for the North Atlantic right whale for seven years, freezing management progress until 2035.

North Atlantic right whales are regularly seen in waters off of Long Island, New York and the Coast of New Jersey. Migrating over 1,000 miles from their northeast feeding grounds to their southern calving grounds, they have already been recorded in the New York Bight and southeast of Atlantic City, New Jersey this year. In 2024, scientists from the New England Aquarium recorded 82 Right whales—including 56 in one day—forty miles south of Long Island. This represents nearly a quarter of the total population.

Extinction is permanent, and the crisis facing the North Atlantic right whale demands immediate, courageous leadership. With fewer than 400 individuals remaining—and a critically low count of roughly 70 breeding females—every single year of delayed action brings this species closer to disappearing forever. The science is undisputed: accidental entanglement in vertical fishing lines is one of the primary drivers of serious injury and death for these whales, with over 86 percent of living right whales carrying scars from past entanglements. These injuries and deaths are preventable, but only if

our national policy allows science-based solutions to move forward.

H.R. 9436 sets a dangerous precedent by locking our ocean management into outdated status quo practices for nearly a decade. Specifically, the bill would prevent NOAA Fisheries from developing and implementing science-based management measures that could reduce the risk of entanglements, such as modifying fishing practices in areas and at times of highest risk, and expanding new technologies that both protect whales and maintain fishing opportunities. Protecting endangered wildlife and fostering resilient coastal economies are not opposing goals. Pushing safety measures off to 2035 stalls the momentum behind collaborative ocean stewardship, science-based dynamic management, and crucial federal resources that help both whales and coastal communities thrive.

Communities in New York and New Jersey have consistently supported forward-thinking, science-based approaches that safeguard our shared marine heritage while ensuring our coastal economies can adapt and flourish. Halting progress for another seven years undermines the work our region has done to promote a healthy ocean ecosystem.

The North Atlantic right whale cannot afford to wait until 2035, and neither can the communities that care about the future of our oceans. We urge you to reject H.R. 9436 and stand up for the recovery of one of the most endangered species on Earth.

Sincerely,

NEW YORK

Candis Whitney, Executive Director, Amelia Island Whale Ambassadors.

John Balet, MS, SUNY Master Science Teacher, Ballston Spa High School, Ballston Spa, New York.

Diana Hernandez, Managing Director, Beyond Plastics, Albany, New York.

Carolina Korth, Co-President, Beyond Plastics Queens, Queens, New York.

Nancy Tudor, Climate Steward, Beyond Plastics Schenectady, Clifton Park, New York.

Michael Rosenthal, President, Capital Region Vegan Network, Albany, New York.

Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Farmingdale, New York.

Barbara Heinzen, Member, Clean Air Coalition of Ravena-Coeymans, New Baltimore, New York.

Christina Rupp, Ecological Artist, Ulster County, New York.

Jean Citarella, Leadership Team, Forest Hills Indivisible, Forest Hills, New York.

Catherine M. Filloux, Playwright, New York City, New York.

Sara Gronim, Co-leader, 350Brooklyn, Brooklyn, New York.

Jennifer Vogt, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, East Northport, New York.

Carl Safina, Endowed Professor in Marine Science, University of New York at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, New York.

Brody Eggert, Eastern Long Island Chapter Manager, Surfrider Foundation, East Hampton, New York.

Natalya Khorover, Founder/Educator, Repurposer Collective, Mamaroneck, New York.

Jessica Welshans, Volunteer Member, Rensselaer Enviro. Coalition, Rensselaer, New York.

Chris Allieri, Executive Director, NYC Plover Project, Rockaway Beach, New York.

Barry Pendergrass, Volunteer, Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, Albany, New York.

Mindy Block, President, Quality Parks, Port Jefferson, New York.

Megan Wolff, Executive Director, P-SNAP Network, New Paltz, New York.

Rob Weltner, President, Operation SPLASH, Freeport, New York.

Gail Tierney, New York Field Representative, Oceana, Brooklyn, New York.

Saman Mahmood, Director of Advocacy, NYC Bird Alliance, New York City, New York.

Joseph Butera, President, NE Ecological Recovery Society, New York.

Susan Schwarz, Board member, LWV Riverowns, Tarrytown, New York.

NEW JERSEY

Casey Deacon, President, Alliance for a Living Ocean Surf City, New Jersey.

Allison McLeod, Interim Executive Director, New Jersey League of Conservation Voters, New Jersey.

Gregory A. Remaud, Executive Director, NY/NJ Baykeeper, Trenton, New Jersey.

Doug O'Malley, Director, Environment New Jersey, Trenton, New Jersey.

John Turner, Conservation Policy Advocate, Seatuck Environmental Association, Setauket, New Jersey.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a link to letters of support from the State of Maine Department of Marine Resources, the National Fisheries Institute, the National Marine Manufacturers Association, New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association, Maine Lobstermen's Association, Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association, Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association, New Hampshire Commercial Fishermen's Association, and the Lobster Advisory Council: <https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/binder1.pdf>

Mr. Speaker, I will say that what is happening in Maine is working. We should be celebrating this. We have seen a slight 2.1-percent increase in the population of right whales over the past 4 years. There has been one right whale death in the last, I think, 20 to 25 years attributed to Maine fishing gear. This is an example of how government and industry can work together to protect the fishery, plus continue this economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN), the chair for the Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Subcommittee.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 9436, the Northeast Lobsterman Protection Act. This legislation will help to safeguard some of the United States' most iconic fisheries, American lobster and Jonah crab.

In Maine, the lobster industry has been subject to regulatory whiplash and operational uncertainty due to pending burdensome regulations and activist litigation.

In 2022, NOAA was poised to finalize regulations to protect the North Atlantic right whale, a move that risked shutting down this fishery entirely. Leaders in the industry argue that those regulations were developed with flawed, inaccurate data.

To combat this, in 2022 Congress enacted a 6-year pause on the enactment

of new regulations, which gave the State regulators and the industry more time to gather more up-to-date science and data to inform new regulations.

While that work is ongoing and has been productive, it has been made clear that more time is needed to incorporate the latest data into final regulations.

H.R. 9436 does just that, ensuring that final regulatory decisions are made in a thoughtful, deliberate manner.

Most importantly, this bill advances the goals and objectives laid out in President Trump's executive order, "Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness."

By allowing adequate time to incorporate the latest science and data into regulations, we can ensure that one of the country's most vital fisheries can continue to operate while safeguarding endangered species like the North Atlantic right whale.

This bill also allows for the ability to further study the impact of offshore wind farms on our aquatic resources, including the North Atlantic right whale. Anyone who claims to care about our whale and fishery populations would surely support such investigations to ensure data-driven and science-based decisionmaking.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman LAWLER for his leadership on this bill and his work to protect our fishermen, and I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this important bill.

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

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the chairman and others here, the facts are these: Since 2022, 31 whales have died or been seriously injured by entanglements.

Entanglements are a huge problem. It is not even in serious dispute. Eighty-five percent of living whales have been entangled at least once, and 60 percent at least twice.

In terms of the alleged progress in the past year or so for this whale, they are not reproducing nearly fast enough to avoid an extinction trajectory. There are right now more Members of the House of Representatives than there are North Atlantic right whales living in our ocean.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, NOAA is in the process of building out an acoustic network that can provide near real-time whale locations along the entire East Coast. Meanwhile, NOAA has contracted with a private company to evaluate 11 technologies that have real potential to reduce threats to whales and identify their locations in real time. While several of these are fully mature, many promising technologies are close but need more time.

My colleagues across the aisle would have you believe that the only solution

is immediate deployment of ropeless gear, which creates unnecessary safety risks for lobstermen.

We can protect America's lobstermen and the right whale. This bill strikes the right balance.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. STAUBER).

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 9436, the Northeast Lobsterman Protection Act, introduced by my good friends, Representative LAWLER and Representative GOLDEN of Maine.

Each and every day, onerous regulations negatively impact our constituents along with the local economies and local communities that we represent. Too often, here in Washington, these onerous regulations are put in place without a full understanding of the impact that they will have on the ground. These regulations often set unreasonable standards or are set to go into effect on unreasonable timelines.

The regulations on the North Atlantic right whale, which are currently mandated to be implemented by the end of 2028, are an example of these unreasonable timelines that will have a negative impact on local and regional economies across New England and will have an outsized impact on the Maine lobstermen.

This bipartisan legislation before us today does not weaken protections for the North Atlantic right whale. The legislation simply delays implementation of these new regulations so we can get it right. This legislation will allow adequate time to seek input from affected industries and communities, ensuring we have fit-for-purpose regulations that will protect the North Atlantic right whale.

Failure to do this the right way and allow time for the right regulations to be developed could devastate the local economy and our fisheries across New England.

Mr. Speaker, I commend my good friend Representative GOLDEN for standing up for his constituents and for working with Representative LAWLER to bring this legislation forward.

Representative GOLDEN is from Maine. He wants this for his constituents and the lobster fishermen from Maine. I think that we ought to listen to Representative GOLDEN, who, in my humble opinion, has been one of the most effective Democrats on the Natural Resources Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 9436.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER).

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill. We must protect the North Atlantic right whale, which, as you heard, is already at risk of extinction. This bill threatens to put them right over the edge.

With only 70 reproductively active females left, the North Atlantic right whale can't afford to wait another 7

years for protection. They realistically could be extinct right now. We can and must act now.

Entanglement in fishing gear is a leading cause, maybe the leading cause, of North Atlantic right whale deaths. In 2023, a provision delayed critical protections intended to reduce these deadly entanglements.

□ 1550

As a result, the earliest measures to protect these North American right whales could be implemented in 2029. That is 3 years from now. This bill would further delay the implementation until 2035. That is a 13-year waiver from the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act requirements. I am wondering why 6 years has not already been enough.

Delaying these protections doesn't ultimately serve the fishing industry's best interests. It will only delay changes that the industry ultimately needs to make any way, leaving them less time to adapt. If they haven't done it in the last 6 years, why do we think they will do it in the next 13? Now is the time we should be working with them and in partnership with the industry to effectively support them.

Mr. Speaker, I don't minimize that the lobster industry is facing uncertainty and economic hardship, but that is a roller coaster of tariff implementations and rollbacks, rising inflation increasing the cost of fuel and bait, and warming waters that reduce larval lobster survival and encourage survivors to migrate northwards to Canadian waters.

Mr. Speaker, if my colleagues across the aisle truly care about protecting lobstermen and fishermen, they would join me in opposing Trump's tariffs, his antagonism of our Canadian neighbors, his war of choice in Iran, his degradation of our environment, and his denial of climate change.

We could do better by our lobstermen by working with them to ensure they have the support they need without sacrificing an entire species.

Mr. Speaker, I hope all my colleagues will join me in opposing this bill and instead work on a solution that would be a win-win for everybody.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH), who represents our country's largest and most productive fishery.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 9436, the Northeast Lobsterman Protection Act.

This bill is fundamentally about getting the science right. It gives the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, or NOAA, the State of Maine, and the lobster industry until 2035 to incorporate the most current, complete data available before implementing sweeping new gear, closure, and speed restrictions under the MMPA, restrictions that, based on outdated information, could devastate a \$2 billion industry and 17,500 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, Alaska knows the cost of regulating with stale data. As the State with America's largest and most valuable commercial fishing industry, we have seen Federal agencies default to rigid one-size-fits-all mandates instead of investing in the modern surveys, monitoring, and technology needed to actually understand what is happening on the water.

That approach does not serve the resource and it doesn't serve the people who depend on it, whether they are lobstermen in Maine or fishermen in Alaska. Native communities back home. Good regulation has to keep pace with good science.

H.R. 9436 does not weaken the MMPA or abandon right whale conservation. It gives regulators the runway to use better science and better tools to protect both the whales and the fishery. This committee endorsed that approach on a bipartisan 22-13 vote, and the Trump administration has backed it, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense, bipartisan bill.

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

Mr. Speaker, I was confused a moment ago because the chairman suggested that the effort to develop all this data and perfect ropeless gear is going really well. These investments are rolling out and this is all being taken very seriously, but here we have a bill that would shut all of that down 2 years early.

This is about running out the clock, Mr. Speaker. We were told that the 6-year pause granted in 2022 was for all these same things, for data collection and to allow time for collaboration and open rulemaking process, and more.

Congress invested \$20 million in ropeless gear development, testing, and deployment. The States and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission ran programs for fishermen to test the gear, but under the Trump administration, NOAA has shut this down. They have been telling the New England Fishery Management Council to deprioritize ropeless gear.

This is not a process that is being taken seriously or that is going well and, therefore, needs more time. This is a stalling tactic that has already begun and is about to receive 7 more years by virtue of the Republican Congress.

This administration has not provided Congress, by the way, with the annual reports on progress toward 2029. That is required in the law. They are ignoring it. They have 2 more years to do their job. States need to finalize that data collection. We don't need another 7-year extension. We especially don't need this to happen 2 years earlier.

Let's allow this process to run its course and see what it produces. Then, if there is a compelling reason for a further extension, we could talk about it.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I am confused by arguments coming from the left. They started off today talking about high prices and the cost of food. What is their solution? They want to shut down another U.S. industry. They want to shut down seafood production.

We are already 80 percent dependent on foreign imports. Their solution is to reduce penalties on Canada and other countries that are our seafood suppliers, shut down 17,500 American jobs, shut down a \$2 billion industry in the State of Maine, and ship more of our money overseas to other countries and let them supply our seafood. They don't have near the protections that we have for our other species. There is a lot of flawed logic in the argument that they are trying to make.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. GOLDEN), who understands Maine lobster fisheries more than anybody else probably in this town.

Mr. GOLDEN of Maine. Mr. Speaker, first, I will offer a bit of a rebuttal to my colleague across the aisle. Of course, I am in his party, but I am standing over here today supporting this legislation.

There has been some talk about timeline. This is 2 years down the road, but, in fact, everyone here knows that a lot of work goes into developing new regulations, guidelines, and other things before we just deploy them out into the world. Even though that deadline is 2 years out, NOAA is already working on those regulations. Something that NOAA and the Maine Department of Marine Resources agree about is that, yes, we are collecting more data with the money that they are thankful Congress gave to get better data points for how we can protect these whales, but since they are already working on what might follow that deadline in 2 years, they are unable to incorporate it into the work that is ongoing right now, hence the necessity of making some movement here in Congress on this issue today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN for the time to speak today and Congressman LAWLER for partnering with me on this bill. This effort is critical for Maine, but its benefits will be shared by fishermen all along the Eastern Seaboard.

This bill is about the future of a heritage industry and the working men and women who risk their lives on the ocean to put nutritious seafood on our plates. It is also about protecting the working-class communities those men and women support.

In my district, lobster fishing is the backbone of towns up and down the coast. In some towns, 20 to 40 percent of the residents hold a lobster license. In those towns, life as they know it would end without fishing. You can liken it—if you don't live on the coast—to what happens when a major

mill shuts down and a town is decimated. For them what is at stake is the continuation of a way of life that is generations deep or the loss of it.

Without it, they know what to expect. All they have to do is cast their eye elsewhere, southward on the East Coast to former fishing communities that have been turned into investment opportunities for people looking for some prime coastal front property to buy and some locals that they would love to employ to work for pennies on the dollar in service to them, in service to people from away.

The Maine lobster industry currently supports roughly 18,000 jobs and it generates hundreds of millions in tax revenue to support schools, infrastructure investments, and State and local services for Mainers.

It is already getting harder and harder to make a living on the water without adding onerous new regulations to satisfy the nearly insatiable appetite of environmental law firms. It is a sad state of affairs that these firms treat every whale death as an opportunity to bring a lawsuit against fishermen that lines their own pockets, provides for their own living, no matter what the cause of that whale death was. It could have nothing to do with fishermen. You can bet they are going to bring a lawsuit. They are doing it backed by money from people who love to eat seafood but apparently think they can have it without fishermen.

□ 1600

Now, there are some who want to say this bill presents us with a false choice between our fishermen and protecting an endangered species, the North Atlantic right whale. The truth is we can do both, and here is how I know that. Maine fishermen are already doing it. They have been good stewards of marine resources and marine life and leaders in the conservation and protection of the North Atlantic right whale.

Over the past 20 years, Maine lobstermen have made effective and costly changes to fishing practices to reduce the risk of entanglements. They have removed many vertical lines from the water by putting more traps on each trawl, despite the fact that it makes fishing less safe for themselves.

They have added breakaways at surface buoys and along inlines to ensure that if a whale or any other marine animal is caught in those traps that the line will break. They have made the switch to sinking ground lines and limited the diameter of vertical lines. This is just a few highlights because they have done much more. These practices already exist under the status quo regulatory framework, and they work.

From 2009 to 2018, the number of annual serious injuries or deaths to North Atlantic right whales attributed to entanglements from American fishing gear was 0.2. I will repeat that: 0.2.

Our efforts are already working. Yet, somehow, these fishermen face the threat of crushing new regulations over and over and over again.

When we enacted this moratorium in 2022, Maine fishermen were at risk of being put out of business by these new regulations and closures that would have spelled doom for Maine's coastal communities.

Maine's lobster fishery is unique. Unlike other fisheries that are dominated by bigger types of fisheries and fishing operations, Maine fisheries, Maine fishermen, is a fleet made up of owner-operated vessels, holding licenses that are passed down through generations.

Had the proposed requirements been implemented back then, many, if not most of them, would not have been able to keep going. Congress wisely put a pause on that and devoted Federal funds to monitor, collect data, and to come up with new best practices to protect fishermen and whales alike.

This year, Maine's Department of Marine Resources told Congress, in no uncertain terms, that the data it collected cannot be incorporated into NOAA's rulemaking on the 2028 timeline and current law. Congress funded this science. Why would we not give State and Federal agencies the time necessary to make good use of it?

This bill does not weaken protections for the North Atlantic right whale. It preserves the current effective regulatory framework until 2035.

With that in mind, I urge you to see this legislation for what it is. It is an opportunity to protect hardworking people and our marine resources' economy, pure and simple. To do so without taking away any existing regulations whatsoever, you have an opportunity to have your lobster and eat it too.

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

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am not sure why my friend from Maine just cited data from 2009 through 2018 to suggest there has been virtually no mortality. The numbers I gave are a little more relevant. From 2022 until now, we know that 31 North Atlantic right whales have either died or been seriously injured by the very type of entanglements we are talking about here—entanglements that would, if this legislation passes, somehow secure a total pass from the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act regulations for a period of 13 full years. That is not honoring these environmental protection laws. That is not upholding them. That is gutting them.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL).

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 9436 pushes the North Atlantic right whale closer to extinction.

I respect my colleague from Maine a great deal, and I agree with him that we can protect the right whale and protect the Maine fishermen as well. A 13-year waiver from complying with the Endangered Species Act does nothing for the lobster industry, which was on

a path to sensible rules that keep fishermen on the water and protect these critically endangered whales. They still have 2 more years to get the rules right, and we don't need to cut off a process that was moving in the right direction.

Let's be clear. The gentleman and I actually share something in common, and that is the immediate threat to fishing communities across this country with President Trump's chaotic trade policies and the war of choice in Iran. If we are serious about American competitiveness, we need to get our priorities straight. We should not be picking unnecessary fights with our closest friend and neighbor. Canada is our ally and our largest trading partner. This foolish trade war we are now in with Canada will tangibly raise costs for American families and create uncertainty for American businesses, workers, and communities.

Fisheries across our country are being decimated by the high price of diesel fuel.

As we have heard from the majority, the lobster industry is a \$2 billion industry that supports about 1,700 jobs. These fishermen are changing how they work and rethinking how many fishing trips they can take given rising costs. They are often opting for longer, more dangerous trips rather than taking multiple trips to try and pull in the same amount of seafood using less oil.

According to the New England's Fishermen's Stewardship Association, this means more fatigued workers and a higher risk of accidents.

Great Lakes fisheries, which include commercial, recreational, and Tribal fisheries, are a \$5.1 billion industry supporting 75,000 jobs. Fishermen are opting to stop fishing because they can't make the math work with diesel as high as it is, and fish prices to consumers are being raised to compensate.

Across the country, marine fisheries generate \$319 billion in sales and support 1.7 million jobs. A U.S. shrimper recently reported spending an additional \$20,000 on a single trip because of diesel costs. These fishermen are already operating on razor-thin margins, and fuel costs are near or exceeding the shrimp prices. This isn't sustainable. Just as we have seen in the Great Lakes, fishermen are going to start walking away from their small businesses.

Not only are our fishing communities struggling to stay afloat, they also need to pass along these additional costs to American families purchasing their seafood.

Back in the Great Lakes region, our manufacturing sector is facing alarming tariffs from Canada because of President Trump's and Secretary Lutnick's inability to seriously and diplomatically negotiate a strong and fair trade deal. As if we needed yet another reminder of the pain inflicted on our States by these policies, the President decided to get back at Canada by changing the name of one of our Great

Lakes. By the way, it is not going over well at home.

Unfortunately, the majority is doing nothing this week to bring down costs and fight for American families and businesses. That is why, at the appropriate time, I will offer a motion to recommit this bill back to the committee. If the House rules permitted, I would have offered the motion with an important amendment to this bill.

My amendment would direct the Secretary of Commerce to publish a report on the high costs of fuel, fishing gear, and retaliatory tariffs on U.S. fishing businesses and the price of healthy seafood for American families.

I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of this amendment into 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. I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for the motion to recommit.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, the argument for the motion to recommit reminds me of what President Reagan said—this is the Democrat philosophy—if it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. If it stops, then subsidize it.

Unfortunately, if it stops, who we are going to be subsidizing are foreign countries that we are importing seafood from.

To correct the record, it is not 1,700 jobs in Maine; it is 17,000 jobs in Maine—over 17,000 jobs.

We are talking about a serious economic impact, and we are also talking about the fact that what is happening right now is working. Why continue to regulate it? Why put more burdens on Maine lobstermen who are in a tough situation, as fishermen are, around the world?

□ 1610

So the solution is to regulate them more? It is like, hey, we see you are having a hard time, so let's put some more regulations on you. That doesn't work.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. GOLDEN).

Mr. GOLDEN of Maine. Mr. Speaker, just a few quick rebuttals. One of my colleagues talked about 30-plus right whale deaths attributed to fisheries in America. I don't know where those numbers come from. All I can tell you is a simple fact, which is that in my 8 years in Congress, there has been one attributed death of a whale to the Maine lobster fishery. That is in 8 years, one, not 30-plus, a single one. In the 20 or 30 years preceding that, there were zero, so I am not quite sure where his numbers are coming from.

In regard to ropeless gear, it has been said that a million pounds of lobster was caught with ropeless gear in the

last 4 years. Well, we are talking about a fishery that lands over 70 million pounds per year. Do the math. That is over 300 million pounds of lobster provided to the American people.

The fact of the matter is that ropeless fishing gear may be a viable alternative some day in the future, but it ain't there yet. It is a long way from being there. A requirement to move to ropeless gear would represent one thing: Shutting down the fishery.

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

Mr. Speaker, the data—31 deaths or serious injuries from entanglements since 2022—comes from NOAA. It is available to Democrats and Republicans alike.

Mr. Speaker, I urge this body to reject H.R. 9436. This bill moves the goalposts and risks the extinction of an iconic whale that calls our Nation's Atlantic waters home.

Instead of taking the next 2 years to address the progress that has been made and additional policy levers that may be necessary to support a thriving lobster fishery and recover the right whale, this bill legislates blindly. It throws away momentum amongst the States, tech companies, and many fishery participants, kicking the can down the road. This is a shame.

I recognize that fishing communities around this country are facing extreme levels of uncertainty, and this administration is doing nothing to help. In the lobster fishery, families who have fished these waters for generations are asking questions about what comes next. H.R. 9436 presents a false choice between saving a native species and protecting their livelihoods.

This delay would undermine massive public investment. Since 2022, Congress has devoted an estimated \$280 million to right whale recovery. We are beginning to see results from these investments. Advancing monitoring technologies have improved mapping of right whale patterns. Vessels are using trackers to avoid conflicts and, most importantly for this debate, ropeless gear now has a near-perfect retrieval success record and a critical safety feature. The man overboard system is now open source technology for ropeless gear developers.

By removing the 2029 regulatory backstop, this bill creates a permission structure that discourages fishery participants from engaging in cooperative research to obtain the answers they say are needed. Worse, it punishes the forward-thinking fishermen who have spent money and time transitioning their gear in good faith.

Lastly, the bill would extend that waiver without authorizing additional money. By delaying action until 2035 without any new funding, NOAA would need to write rules using obsolete data from the early 2020s.

Democrats offered improvements to this bill to ensure that lobstermen and their families would get the support needed to confidently transition to this

new gear, but Republicans rejected these improvements.

Our suggestions would have authorized additional Federal investments for on-demand ropeless fishing technology to ensure fishermen can keep working, while removing the deadly vertical lines that entangle, injure, and kill these endangered whales.

True leadership invests in modernizing our fisheries, not freezing our conservation laws in place while marine life pays the ultimate price. Allowing a species to go extinct on our watch is a moral failure that we cannot erase.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to reject this dangerous precedent, stand with science, and vote “no” on H.R. 9436. I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us today would provide much-needed certainty to one of the United States’ most important and iconic commercial fisheries, Maine lobster.

When I visited that beautiful State, I loved what they call it there, lobstah. When you think of lobster, you think of something that is woven into the fabric of the history, the ambiance, the beauty of Maine. When people from other States think of Maine, a lot of times what comes to their mind is lobster.

Passing this legislation will give NOAA more time to craft regulations to protect the North Atlantic right whale and will ensure that these regulations are based on the best available science and ensure long-term operational certainty for the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries.

The legislation before us helps to advance the goals laid out in President Trump’s executive order, “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness.” The Trump administration has issued a Statement of Administration Policy expressing support for identical legislation, which I include in the RECORD.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 8509—AMENDING THE CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2023 TO EXTEND THE TIME PERIOD FOR WHICH CERTAIN REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE ARE EFFECTIVE, REP. GOLDEN, D-ME

The Administration strongly supports passage of H.R. 8509, which would extend the time period, from 2028 until 2035, for which the Department of Commerce’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Final Rule amending the regulations implementing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (86 Fed. Reg. 51970) is deemed sufficient to ensure the continued authorizations of the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries are in full compliance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973. It would also extend the requirements for the NMFS to promote the innovation and adoption of gear technologies in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries and promulgate new regulations for the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries using existing and innovative gear technologies until 2035. This bill aligns with the Administration’s priorities

in Executive Order 14276, Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, to promote the adoption of new technology and the productive harvest of our seafood resources.

If H.R. 8509 were presented to the President, his senior advisors would recommend that he sign it into law.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative LAWLER for his leadership on this issue and recognize Representative GOLDEN of Maine for his tireless advocacy for this critical industry on behalf of his constituents and his State that he loves.

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

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

Pursuant to House Resolution 1499, 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 moves to recommit the bill H.R. 9436 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. 9436 to the Committee on Natural Resources with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith, with the following amendment:

Add at the end the following:

SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date on which the Secretary of Commerce publishes a report on the regional economic effects of the trade wars with Canada and China and the war in Iran, including increased fuel costs, retaliatory tariffs, and costs of fishing gear, and on the effects of such policies on the cost of seafood for American families.

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 will be postponed.

□ 1620

PROVIDING FOR THE CONDEMNATION AND DENOUNCEMENT OF SOCIALISM IN ALL ITS FORMS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1499, I call up the res-

olution (H. Res. 1490) providing for the condemnation and denouncement of socialism in all its forms, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1499, the resolution is considered read.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1490

Whereas socialist ideology necessitates a concentration of power that has, time and time again, collapsed into communist regimes, totalitarian rule, and repressive dictatorships;

Whereas socialism has repeatedly led to famine and mass murders, and the killing of over 100,000,000 people worldwide;

Whereas, since the November 2025 New York City mayoral election of a Democratic Socialist, candidates for public office affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) have run in over one hundred elections in at least half the states;

Whereas the DSA’s ideological tenet labeled “Democracy for All” calls for noncitizens and incarcerated criminals to vote in American elections;

Whereas the DSA’s ideological tenet labeled “A Democratic Congress” calls for abolishing the U.S. Senate, implementing ranked choice voting in all elections, and replacing the two-party system;

Whereas, on February 19, 2026, the DSA stated “[t]he United States of America has never been a democracy”;

Whereas the DSA’s ideology and socialism, in any form, are incompatible with American values and the United States Constitution;

Whereas the State of New Jersey registered nearly 6,600 noncitizens to vote, with reportedly hundreds successfully voting in elections;

Whereas the Trump Administration’s Department of Homeland Security engaged in a joint investigation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), which charged four noncitizens with crimes connected to illegally voting in Federal elections and making false statements while applying for American citizenship;

Whereas, under the leadership of President Donald J. Trump, the Department of Homeland Security has made the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) service accessible to all states to find and remove ineligible noncitizens from state voter rolls;

Whereas multiple States have found documented instances of noncitizens illegally registered to vote as a result of access to the SAVE service;

Whereas, under Democrat leadership, several local jurisdictions in the United States of America allow noncitizens to vote in elections, diluting the votes of American citizens;

Whereas the United States House of Representatives has passed several bills, including the SAVE Act and the SAVE America Act, to require common-sense election integrity measures, including proof of citizenship, photo identification, and database checks;

Whereas the American people deserve to be confident that American elections are free, fair, and secure;

Whereas common-sense measures like providing photo identification to vote ensure that American elections are secure; and