

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO LIFE

HON. JO ANN EMERSON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mrs. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a constitutional amendment for the protection of the right to life. Tragically, this most basic human right has been disregarded, set aside, abused, spurned, and sometimes altogether forgotten. Even more tragically, the United States Government has been a willing partner in this affair, and the sad consequence is the sacrifice of something far more important than just principle.

One of the things that sets America apart from the rest of world is the fact that in this country, everyone is equal before the law. Regardless of race, religion, or background, each person has fundamental rights that are guaranteed by the law. However, we too often overlook the rights of perhaps the most vulnerable among us—the unborn. When abortion is legal and available on demand, then where are the rights of the unborn? When abortion is sanctioned and sometimes paid for by the government, then how do we measure the degree to which life has been cheapened? When an innocent life is taken before its time, then how can one say that this is justice in America?

My amendment would establish beyond a doubt the fundamental right to life. Congress has an obligation to do what it has failed to do for so long, fully protect the unborn. I urge this body to move forward with this legislation to put an end to a most terrible injustice.

INTRODUCTION OF THE
NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY BIRD
CONSERVATION ACT

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce today the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

This important conservation measure is modeled after the highly successful programs that Congress created to assist African and Asian elephants, rhinoceroses, and tigers.

Based on the success of the African Elephant Conservation Act, I am confident that this small investment of Federal funds will provide the lifeline that neotropical migratory birds need to survive in the wild.

Neotropical birds, like bluebirds, robins, orioles, and goldfinches, travel across international borders and depend upon thousands of miles of suitable habitat. In fact, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, neotropical migratory birds typically spend five months of the year at Caribbean/Latin American wintering sites, four months in North American breeding areas, and three months traveling to these sites during spring and autumn migrations.

Sadly, there are 90 North American bird species that are listed as either threatened or

endangered under the Endangered Species Act and an additional 124 birds that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has identified on its list of Migratory Nongame Birds of Management Concern.

In North America, an estimated 70 percent of prairie birds are declining. The Government of Mexico lists approximately 390 birds species as endangered, threatened, vulnerable, or rare. What is lacking, however, is a strategic plan for bird conservation, money for on-the-ground projects, public awareness, and any real coordination among the various nations where neotropical migratory birds reside.

While the full extent of the problems facing neotropical migratory birds is unclear, there is no debate over the fact that both bird populations and critical habitat declined significantly in the 1990's. We must act now before more of these species become endangered or extinct. This bill will contribute to the recovery and conservation of migratory birds, without violating private property rights.

There are 60 million adult Americans who enjoy watching and feeding birds at their homes. In fact, these activities generate some \$20 billion in economic activity each year. In addition, healthy bird populations are an invaluable asset for farmers and timber interests. By consuming detrimental insects, these birds prevent the loss of millions of dollars each year.

Under the terms of this legislation, an individual or an organization would be able to submit a project proposal to the Secretary of the Interior. While the bill does not limit the type of projects, I would expect that efforts to determine the condition of neotropical migratory bird habitat, implement new or improved conservation plans, undertake population studies, educate the public, and reduce the destruction of essential habitat would be forthcoming. Since these birds migrate between the Caribbean, Latin America, and North America, comprehensive plans must be developed. It does little good if we are successful in conserving suitable habitat in only a portion of their range.

During the previous Congress, I introduced a similar bill to assist neotropical migratory birds. In fact, that bill was the subject of a public hearing on September 17, 1998. At that time, the Administration testified that "H.R. 4517 goes a long way in promoting the effective conservation and management of neotropical migratory birds by supporting conservation programs and providing financial resources. We applaud this important and timely initiative." In addition, representatives from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the National Audubon Society testified in strong support of my legislation.

I am confident that a Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund would provide much-needed support for projects designed to conserve critical habitat for declining migratory bird species in an innovative and cost-effective way.

I urge my colleagues to support the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN MEAT
LABELING ACT

HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce my original cosponsorship of the Country of Origin Meat Labeling Act of 1999. I am looking forward to working in a bipartisan manner with my colleague, Representative CHENOWETH of Idaho, on this important legislation for America's ranchers, farmers, and consumers.

The Country of Origin Meat Labeling Act of 1999 is designed to provide American consumers with the right to know where the meat products they are feeding their families are produced. As we all know, American consumers can easily determine which country their automobiles are from and which country their shoes, shirts, and trousers are from, but they have no idea where the meat and meat products they feed their families originate.

Throughout my service in the House of Representatives, I have been a strong supporter of country of origin labeling—especially for meat and meat products—because of its common-sense nature, its benefits to ranchers and consumers, and its cost-free benefit to taxpayers. During the 105th Congress, I joined Representative CHENOWETH as an original cosponsor of H.R. 1371, the Country of Origin Meat Labeling Act of 1997. I was pleased that the Senate adopted an amendment identical to H.R. 1371 by unanimous consent during consideration of the FY 1999 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

Unfortunately, the special interests prevailed during the Agriculture Appropriations Conference Committee and the meat labeling provision was dropped from the report. Instead, Congress directed the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to conduct another study to determine the empirical impacts of country of origin labeling for consumers, packers, and producers. Basically, the study provides the packing industry with yet more time to delay this important, consumer-friendly legislation.

Mr. Speaker, America's livestock industry is in dire straits. Livestock prices are near record lows while at the same time packers' profits are at near record highs. America's ranchers and farmers have invested heavily in genetic research and nutrients to produce the most cost-effective and nutritious products in the world. But, unfortunately, without country of origin labeling, consumers have no idea where the meat products they purchase originate, leaving American cattlemen's efforts for naught.

I look forward to working with my colleagues from both sides of the aisle, the National Farmers Union, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the American Sheep Industry Association, and the National Consumers League in the passage of this important legislation.