

Calendar No. 405

105TH CONGRESS }
2d Session }

SENATE

{ REPORT
{ 105-209

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE OCEAN

R E P O R T

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

ON

H. CON. RES. 131



JUNE 10, 1998.—Ordered to be printed

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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JUNE 10, 1998.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. MCCAIN, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. Con. Res. 131]

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, to which was referred H. Con. Res. 131, “A Concurrent Resolution acknowledging 1998 as the International Year of the Ocean and expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the ocean”, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with an amendment and recommends that the concurrent resolution (as amended) do pass.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of H. Con. Res. 131 is to express the sense of the Congress that the ocean is of paramount importance to the economy, environment, and national security of the United States and that the United States must exercise and promote comprehensive stewardship of the ocean and the natural resources it contains. The resolution also acknowledges the designation by the United Nations (U.N.) of 1998 as the International year of the Ocean.

BACKGROUND AND NEEDS

Approximately 70 percent of the Earth’s surface is covered by oceans and these waters contain a wealth of natural resources. The oceans provide habitats for a large part of the planet’s biological diversity. They are an essential source of food for humanity and contain critical energy and mineral reserves. The oceans are also fundamental components of the global climate system, as the major 1997–98 El Nino event graphically demonstrated.

As a nation with extensive borders on the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans, the United States maintains an especially close rela-

tionship with the sea. The oceans play a crucial role in the United States' national security and provide a conduit of transportation for 95 percent of U.S. foreign trade. One out of every six American jobs is marine-related. More than one-half of the United States' population lives and works within 50 miles of the coastline. The U.S. exclusive economic zone, that area of the ocean extending from 3 to 200 miles seaward from the coast, is equal in size to the entire land area of the United States.

Despite the obvious importance of the oceans to humanity, the condition of the marine environment has declined in a number of respects over the past several decades. Harmful algal blooms (HABs) such as *Pfiesteria piscicida* outbreaks and red tides are increasing in frequency and intensity. According to one conservative estimate, HAB events in the United States generate direct public health, economic (seafood and tourism), and State and Federal government research and response costs of between \$25 million and \$70 million each year. More than 50 percent of the estuaries in the United States experience abnormally low oxygen concentrations (hypoxia) for at least part of each year, and one-third experience complete oxygen depletion (anoxia). Marine life in such areas must either flee or perish. Coastal wetland losses have negatively affected many of the 75 percent of U.S. commercial fish and shellfish species that rely on wetlands at some stage in their life cycles. Approximately 10 percent of the world's coral reefs have already been destroyed, and experts predict the loss of another 20 to 30 percent of the world's coral reefs by 2025 if current trends persist. Coral reefs are also experiencing an increase in the number and virulency of diseases.

In combination with the loss of or damage to fish habitat, unsustainable fishing practices have resulted in the decline of many marine fish stocks at home and abroad. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reported in September 1997, that 96 U.S. marine fish species are overfished or approaching an overfished condition. Due to inadequate data, the status of 448 other fish species is unknown. Given that American fishermen landed 9.6 billion pounds of seafood valued at over \$3.5 billion in 1996, and that these landings generated \$21 billion in value-added economic activity, the decline in marine fish stocks represents a major economic as well as environmental issue for the nation.

The United States has traditionally been the world's leader in ocean stewardship, as evidenced by the passage and enforcement of major Federal laws such as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, the National Marine Sanctuaries Preservation Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Clean Water Act. But, as significant ocean-related problems have persisted and, in some cases, gotten worse, focused attention on ocean issues by policymakers and the public is necessary to ensure the development of workable solutions to these problems for the next century.

The International Year of the Ocean designation for 1998 serves to draw worldwide attention to the importance of the oceans, the problems facing them, and the need for concerted effort by all ocean nations to address these problems. First proposed by the U.N. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the designa-

tion was approved by the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization at its General Conference in 1993. The U.N. General Assembly adopted the proposal in December, 1994. Many events and activities involving governments, scientific associations, industry groups, and conservation organizations will take place around the world this year as part of the international Year of the Ocean. These include the Administration's National Ocean Conference in Monterey, California, and Expo '98, the world's fair in Lisbon, Portugal, which has an oceans theme. As a part of this global commemoration, H. Con. Res. 131 expresses the Congress' strong interest in the state of the oceans and continuing Congressional commitment to policies and initiatives designed to secure a more certain future for the oceans and the myriad benefits that they provide.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

H. Con. Res. 131 was received by the Senate from the House of Representatives on January 28, 1998, and was referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. On March 12, 1998, H. Con. Res. 131 was considered by the Committee during an open executive session. Senators Snowe and Kerry offered an amendment in the nature of a substitute which added language stating that: (1) the American public considers the condition of the ocean to be important but rates its current condition negatively; (2) Federal agencies should identify opportunities to enhance cooperation with other nations on ocean issues; (3) Federal agencies should cooperate with the private sector in developing programs to advance exploration of the ocean, conservation of marine habitats and species, and sustainable use of ocean resources; and (4) Federal agencies should encourage participation in State, local, and private programs that use education and the arts to increase public awareness of the ocean and the need for conservation and sustainable management of ocean resources. The amendment was adopted by voice vote and the resolution as amended was ordered favorably reported by voice vote.

ESTIMATED COSTS

In accordance with paragraph 11(a) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate and section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee provides the following cost estimate, prepared by the Congressional Budget Office:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, March 18, 1998.

Hon. JOHN MCCAIN,
*Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has reviewed H. Con. Res. 131, a concurrent resolution acknowledging 1998 as the International Year of the Ocean and expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the ocean, as ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on March 12, 1998.

CBO estimates that adopting this resolution would have no effect on the federal budget. H. Con. Res. 131 would express the sense of the Congress that (1) the ocean is of paramount importance to the economic future, environmental quality, and national security of the United States; (2) the United States has a responsibility to exercise and promote comprehensive stewardship of the ocean and the living marine resources it contains; and (3) federal agencies are encouraged to examine and improve United States ocean programs and to advance the exploration of the ocean and the appropriate use of ocean resources.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Gary Brown. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

Sincerely,

JUNE E. O'NEILL, *Director*.

REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENT

In accordance with paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee provides the following evaluation of the regulatory impact of the legislation, as reported:

Because H.C.Res. 131 does not create any new programs, the legislation will have no additional regulatory impact, and will result in no additional reporting requirements. The legislation will have no further effect on the number of types of individuals and businesses regulated, the economic impact of such regulation, the personal privacy of affected individuals, or the paperwork required from such individuals and businesses.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Preamble

The preamble addresses, among other things, the vast scope of the oceans; the many natural resources; the limits to human understanding of the oceans; the time elapsed since the last comprehensive national review of U.S. ocean policy; and the designation by the United Nations of 1998 as the International Year of the Ocean.

Resolving clause

In the resolution, Congress recognizes the significance of the ocean to the economy, environment, and national security of the United States and acknowledges the responsibility of the United States to exercise and promote comprehensive stewardship of the ocean. The resolution also encourages Federal agencies to take advantage of the International Year of the Ocean in 1998 to: (1) review U.S. ocean policies and programs; (2) identify opportunities to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of U.S. ocean policies and programs; (3) identify opportunities to enhance cooperation with other nations on ocean issues; (4) cooperate with academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and industry to develop scientific, educational, and resource management programs related to the ocean; and (5) encourage participation in State, local, and private programs and initiatives that use education and the arts to in-

crease public awareness of the ocean and the need for the conservation and sustainable management of ocean resources.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee states that the bill as reported would make no change to existing law.

