

## **FUNDING WILDLIFE PROTECTIONS FOR MARINE AND COASTAL SPECIES**

Passed: 217-197

### **SUMMARY:**

The House passed a six-bill FY 2021 appropriations package including the Commerce Justice Science bill, which provides funding for conservation of marine and coastal species, including a needed increase for the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale. *(July 31, 2020, Roll Call No. 178)*

### **BACKGROUND:**

The North Atlantic right whale population has been declining precipitously in the last few years and is now characterized as being one step from extinction by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. New scientific information shows the population now consists of 356 animals, only about 70 of whom are breeding females. The species has suffered nearly a 25 percent population loss in less than a decade. Entanglements with fishing gear are the leading cause of skyrocketing rates of right whale deaths and serious injuries and also are preventing them from reproducing, pushing calving rates to historic lows.

The FY 2021 Defense, Commerce, Justice, Science, Energy and Water Development, Financial Services and General Government, Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development appropriations package, H.R. 7617, would provide \$1.31 trillion in discretionary funding for six of the twelve fiscal 2021 appropriations bills including \$75.4 billion for the Commerce Justice Science bill that supports the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Programs funded under NOAA conserve marine and coastal ecosystems and dependent species.

The underlying Commerce Justice Science bill as passed out of the appropriations committee included a modest but important increase of \$2 million specifically for North Atlantic right whale conservation, for a total of \$5 million, including for the development of innovative fishing gear technology for trap/pot lobster and crab fisheries. An amendment sponsored by Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.) passed when the bill was under consideration on the House floor increased the funding by \$1.5 million to a total amount of \$6.5 million.

### **OUTCOME:**

On July 31, 2020, the House passed H.R. 7617, 217-197. "Yes" was the pro-conservation vote.