

# Defend the Endangered Species Act:

Share your opposition to the ESA Amendments Act of 2025

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- I. Overview
- II. Topline talking points
- III. Send a message to your representative
- IV. Make a call to your representative
- V. Sample letter to the editor
- VI. Sample posts and graphics for social media

## **I. Overview**

Our planet is currently facing a biodiversity crisis of epic proportion with the potential for half of all species going extinct in the next 30 years. Now is the time to prioritize protecting our shared national heritage and work together to strengthen, not weaken, our nation's best tool for helping to prevent America's wildlife from extinction, the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

An astonishing 99% of species listed under the ESA have been saved from disappearing forever, and hundreds are currently on the road to recovery. Unfortunately, Representative Westerman's (R-AR) appalling bill, "The Endangered Species Act Amendments Act of 2025" (H.R. 1897), more aptly called the Extinction Act, would eviscerate protections for wildlife on the brink of extinction. Contrary to the bill's stated purpose of "optimizing conservation," beloved animals like Florida manatees, grizzly bears, sea turtles, whales and more could enjoy less protection and suffer more harm if it were to pass.

We need dedicated wildlife advocates to raise their collective voices in opposition to the ESA Amendments Act of 2025. This toolkit will help you do just that! It includes talking points to bolster your message, tips for communicating with your members of Congress, and sample messages you can personalize to help amplify the importance of protecting endangered species.

For additional information, please check out our [webpage for H.R. 1897](#).

If you have any questions, need additional resources, or would like someone to review your communications, please reach out to Caitlin Cattelino, Defenders' Director of National Outreach, at [ccattelino@defenders.org](mailto:ccattelino@defenders.org).

## **II. Topline talking points**

The ESA Works!

- The ESA is the strongest and most effective U.S. law for preventing extinction. It has a near-perfect track record of preventing extinction, with 99% of species listed

under the Act having survived and hundreds on the path to recovery. Currently, more than 1,650 U. S. species are listed.

- Species saved from extinction by the ESA include America’s national symbol – the bald eagle – as well as the peregrine falcon, the brown pelican, the American alligator, the gray whale and the whooping crane.
- The ESA is a proven and flexible law. Over the years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have relied on the ESA’s clear goals, direction and flexibility to issue regulations and guidance that are responsive to evolving conservation needs and that take into consideration both species protection and communities. Congress should not rewrite the successful ESA.
- A majority of registered voters strongly support the ESA. In fact, a 2025 poll showed that at least [84% of Americans support the ESA](#). This support cuts across ideological and geographical boundaries and does not match up with Congress’s attempts to gut the ESA.
- Saving wildlife and the habitats on which they depend is directly related to human health – healthy wildlife populations support healthy ecosystems, clean water, clean air, crops and more on which we all depend.
- To find a list of threatened and endangered wildlife in your state, [click here](#).

The ESA Amendments Act of 2025 (H.R. 1897) aka Extinction Act

- H.R. 1897, [the ESA Amendments Act of 2025](#), would eviscerate the most important aspects of the ESA, pushing our wildlife to extinction.
- It is one of the worst-ever attempts to eviscerate the ESA. It would gut many of the law’s core tenets, warp its foundational reliance on the best available science, increase the potential for political interference, impose additional burdensome and costly process on agencies that already are under-funded and under-staffed, and drastically reduce protections for imperiled species.
  - Damaging provisions in H.R. 1897 include:
    - Strike at “the heart” of the ESA by weakening consultations that limit harm to imperiled species
    - Gut the review of “take permits” that allow developers to harm or kill listed species, as well as increase allowable “taking” of threatened species
    - Extend deadlines for protecting species that need the ESA’s help to avoid extinction
    - Erode science-based decision making by establishing a presumption that data submitted by a State, local, or tribal government is the best available science regardless of its quality.
    - Make it harder to protect habitat that imperiled species need to survive

- Make it easier to use the extraordinary exemption process allowed under the ESA – [called the God Squad](#) – that could result in species extinction.

### **III. Send a message to your representative**

Your representative is a key vote for protecting endangered wildlife. Sending them a message explaining why upholding the ESA is important to you and why you oppose H.R. 1897 can influence the way your representative votes when the bill comes to the House floor.

We've made it really easy for you to send a message to your representative. [Click here to see our sample letter](#). If you can, take a moment to change the subject line and add your own thoughts at the beginning of the message. A personalized communication that expresses your connection to an issue can make a much greater impression.

Alternatively, you can send a personalized message through your representative's email page on their website. To find your representative's webpage, [click here and enter your address](#). Then, click on the "contact" link to be directed to their email page.

### **IV. Make a call to your representative**

Calling your representative is an effective way to share your opposition to H.R. 1897. For many congressional offices, even a small number of calls can elevate the importance of an issue. Below is a call script you can use. Feel free to personalize it, however, to better reflect your voice and your concerns.

To find your representative's phone number, [click here and enter your address](#).

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a constituent from [CITY, ZIP CODE]. I'm calling to urge you to strongly oppose H.R. 1897, the ESA Amendments of 2025. If passed, this bill would weaken decades of conservation success and severely undermine the Endangered Species Act's ability to conserve wildlife. Beloved animals, including Florida manatees, grizzly bears, and whales, and imperiled wildlife in our community, like \_\_\_\_\_, could have less protection and suffer more harm if H.R. 1897 becomes law.

Again, I urge you to protect our vulnerable wildlife by voting AGAINST H.R. 1897.  
Thank you for your time.

### **V. Sample letter to the editor (LTE) and tips for writing LTEs**

Using local media is one of the best ways to elevate issues that matter to you, like defending the ESA. Below are tips for writing and submitting your LTE, along with a sample letter that you can personalize.

- USE YOUR OWN WORDS. Don't simply cut and paste from sample talking points or LTE templates. Many papers won't print letters if they suspect they are part of a letter campaign.
- Include something about who you are and why you care: *"I am [mother, outdoors person, teacher, business owner, scientist, religious leader, etc.] and I care about protecting endangered species because..."*
- Avoid direct criticism of specific individuals. It's okay to criticize the administration or Congress, but we advise against name-dropping. Focus on the impact of the individual's policy.
- LTEs tend to be short and concise. If the newspaper does not specify a word limit, aim for approximately 200-250 words.
- End your LTE with a strong call-to-action that will motivate readers to take the next step.
- Do not attach your LTE to an email. Copy and paste your letter into the body of the email and write "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line.
- Please include your name, address, city, state and phone number for verification purposes. The newspapers will not print your personal contact information.
- Proofread your letter. A letter with several spelling and grammatical errors is unlikely to be published.
- Avoid submitting the same LTE to multiple papers at one time.
- If you haven't heard from the newspaper or seen your LTE published five days after you submitted it, send one polite follow-up email to check on the status of your LTE.

Please personalize the letter below to better reflect your voice and wildlife in your community. Even adding a sentence or two that describes why you care about defending the ESA will make a difference!

Dear Editor,

As a [STATE] resident, I care deeply about protecting the health of our lands and wildlife because [REASONS XYZ]. Unfortunately, our country is losing both our wildlife and wild places at a rapid pace, and the Endangered Species Act, one of our best tools to address this crisis, is also under attack.

Even though scientists declare that we are on the verge of the planet's sixth mass-extinction event, anti-wildlife members of Congress have proposed over 60 pieces of legislation since January 2025 that would undermine the ESA. One of those attacks is H.R. 1897, Rep. Bruce Westerman's (R-AR) "ESA Amendments Act of 2025." This bill should really be called the Extinction Act as it's one of the worst-ever attempts to completely gut the ESA. It would weaken many of the ESA's core tenets, including the reliance on the best available science, and increase the potential for political interference. If passed, this bill would also drastically slow the listing process for wildlife on the brink of extinction.

I urge Rep. *[NAME (R/D-STATE)]* to oppose any legislative threats to the ESA, especially the incredibly harmful ESA Amendments Act. We must speak up for the ESA and *[STATE'S]* cherished imperiled species, including *[A BELOVED SPECIES]*. Our elected officials are in Congress to represent our values – call on them to vote against extinction!

Sincerely/Regards,  
*[FULL NAME, CITY, STATE]*

## **VI. Sample social media posts**

Social media is an effective and public way to share your opinions with members of Congress. Below are some sample social media posts and graphics that you can use to raise awareness for H.R. 1897 and urge your representative to oppose The Extinction Act. Make sure to tag your representative so that they will see the post!

### *Sample Post 1*

Representative Bruce Westerman's ESA Amendments Act is playing politics with extinction.

The Endangered Species Act needs no "reform." 99% of the species listed under the ESA have been saved from extinction, including bald eagles, peregrine falcons, sea turtles and humpback whales. All animals that would have ceased to exist if we hadn't stepped in to save them.

Preserving wildlife resonates with who we are as Americans – rolling back their protections does not.

### *Sample Post 2*

The ESA Amendments Act? More like the EXTINCTION Act.

By changing many of the law's core tenets and opening the door for politics to influence wildlife decision-making over science, the ESA Amendments Act could be a death sentence for countless species already teetering on the edge of extinction.

### *Sample Post 3*

OPPOSE the ESA Amendments Act! *[@INSERT REP HANDLE/NAME]*

The ESA Amendments Act would do nothing but gut the Endangered Species Act and push animals on the brink of extinction over the edge.

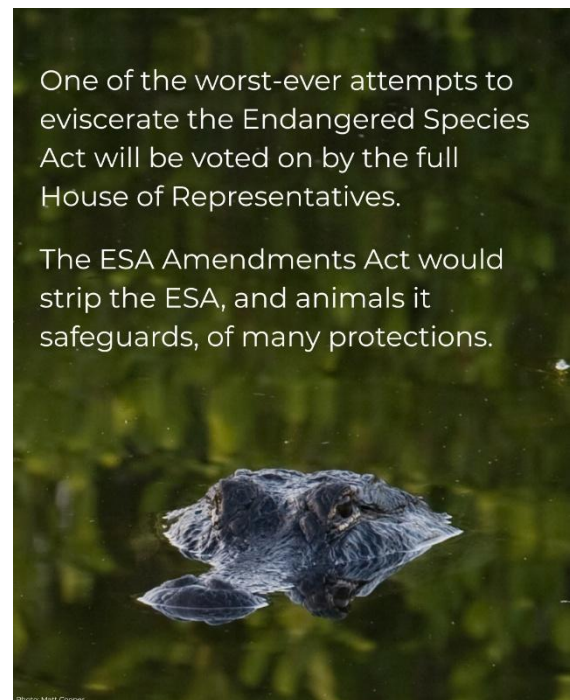
With 99% of species listed still with us today, we know the ESA works. The science is clear: Our world is facing an extinction crisis. Right now, we can't afford to rip up our most effective law for saving animals from disappearing forever.

*Sample Post 4*

A better name for the ESA Amendments Act is the Extinction Act because that's exactly what it will do. We know the ESA works – in fact, most Americans regardless of political party support the Endangered Species Act and what it does for our wild neighbors.

[@INSERT REP HANDLE]: OPPOSE H.R. 1897, the ESA Amendments Act!

Use one of these sample graphics to raise the visibility of your post!



Use the link in below to tell  
your representatives  
to **OPPOSE** the  
ESA Amendments Act



Photo: Ken Griffins/Stockphoto

**TAKE ACTION NOW**

Tell your representatives  
to **OPPOSE** the  
ESA Amendments Act



Photo: Ken Griffins/Stockphoto

Use the link in our bio to tell  
your representatives  
to **OPPOSE** the  
ESA Amendments Act



Photo: Ken Griffins/Stockphoto

The ESA has a **99% success** rate.  
It saved all the species featured in  
this post from **extinction**.  
It **can** and **will** save more if we save it.



Photo: Vitor Sotnyer