

and so it is with heartfelt thanks that I thank the gentleman, the ranking member of the committee, as well as all of my colleagues for their tremendous support so that our stewardship of this committee could indeed be one in which we could be proud.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, the decline of estuary habitats—especially in the San Francisco Bay estuary—has been well-documented in the scientific and resource management literature for over 30 years. Tragically, San Francisco Bay has lost over 95% of its tidal wetlands and continues to be besieged by invasive and aquatic nuisance species.

Fortunately, S. 835, the Estuaries and Clean Water Act, will provide a reasonable, balanced approach to both preserve remaining estuarine habitats and to facilitate effective, locally-driven estuary restoration in estuaries like San Pablo Bay and Suisun Bay in my district.

I am particularly pleased that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will be eligible to participate in this new program. NGOs, such as Save the Bay and The Bay Institute in the Bay Area, embody the locally driven focus of this legislation and provide local expertise and support.

Amendments agreed to in conference also enhance the role of the Estuary Habitat Restoration Council in the selection of projects and the delegation of oversight responsibilities for project implementation. This will bring additional expertise and provide direct ties to other successful Federal-State partnership programs for protecting the estuaries, such as the National Estuary Program, the National Estuarine Research Reserve Program, and the National Marine Fisheries Service's Fishery Habitat Restoration program.

This conference report is good environmental legislation and I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support its passage.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the Conference Report on Estuaries and Clean Waters Act. This bill provides critical relief to the Long Island Sound and estuaries across the country.

Estuaries are an integral part of our environment, as well as our economy. They give live to and provide a habitat for many important species, they naturally cleanse our water, they provide protection against floods and storm damage, and serve as a playground for children and families during the summer months. The health of our nation's estuaries are critical to the protection of our natural heritage, and to those who make their lives off these waters.

The Long Island Sound, in particular, is one of the most complex estuaries in the country—10 percent of the U.S. population lives within 50 miles of the Sound and millions more flock to it for recreation every year. It brings in more than \$5 billion annually to the regional economy from various activities—all of which require clean water.

However, these natural jewels are in danger of being lost forever. Estuaries are suffering from severe water quality problems, declining habitat quality, and, in some areas, total habitat loss. More than 50 percent of wetlands in coastal states have been destroyed—an amount equal in size to six Grand Canyons.

If you don't want to take my word on how important an estuary can be to our communities and our economy, I invite you to visit

with the lobstermen in my district. Walk the docks with them, and listen to their stories. We are suffering a massive lobster die-off in the Long Island Sounds that has virtually wiped out an industry. While we are still searching for the specific cause of the die-off, we do know that a safer, cleaner Sound would mean that incidents like this would be less likely to occur in the future.

This bill provides a sensible approach to a problem that has plagued efforts to clean up our estuaries—the lack of a reliable, steady funding source for implementing conservation and management plans. Cleaning up estuaries cannot be piecemeal effort. This conference report takes a step in the right direction by authorizing the Long Island Sound Program at \$200 million over five years—a significant increase over the \$3 million a year it currently receives. It takes a comprehensive approach to fix such a complex problem.

That is why I have fought alongside Nita Lowey to pass the Water Pollution Control and Estuary Restoration Act, which we first introduced nearly eight years ago, and which we fought for again in the current Congress. I want to thank all of my colleagues that have supported this effort over the years, especially my colleagues from Connecticut and New York, who have worked together to bring relief to the Sound. Thank you for working together on a bipartisan approach to fixing a non-partisan problem.

We have an obligation to protect and preserve the Sound for future generations. It is the right thing to do for our children and for our economy, and for men and women—like the Long Island Sound's lobstermen that are still struggling to stay afloat. I urge the House to pass this important legislation.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 835, the Estuary Habitat and Chesapeake Bay Restoration Act.

I would like to thank Mr. GILCHREST for all his efforts in bringing this bill forward.

I am thrilled that we are recognizing the critical importance of estuaries—the diverse, thriving habitats where fresh and salt water mix—and that this legislation will strengthen the all-important partnerships between federal, state, and local interests for estuary habitat restoration.

As a co-chair with NITA LOWEY of the Long Island Sound Caucus, I am particularly pleased that this legislation includes a title on Long Island Sound Restoration.

All of us who live in the Long Island Sound region owe a debt of gratitude to NANCY JOHNSON, and RICK LAZIO for their sponsorship and stewardship of the Long Island Sound Restoration Act.

Republicans and Democrats alike have worked for years on the ongoing local-state-federal effort to restore the Sound, and know just how important this important body of water is.

The Sound contributed over \$5.5 billion to our regions economy in 1994—and obviously contributes even more today—through water-dependent activities such as commercial and recreational fishing, boating, and tourism.

The \$40 million annual authorization for the Sound in this legislation will make it possible to continue the progress begun six years ago when New York and Connecticut first signed the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for Long Island Sound, which in itself was the culmination of 10 years of effort.

Since the implementation of the CCMP, our states have spent an extraordinary amount on Long Island Sound. The federal government has played a small, though vital role.

Today we have the opportunity to back up the promise of the CCMP with a commitment to fund Long Island Sound restoration in line with the Sound's place as the center of a watershed region encompassing 8 million people, with over 15 million living within 50 miles of the Sound's shores.

This is truly an estuary of national significance and one which deserves the support of this body. I urge my colleague to vote for this excellent bill.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the conference report.

The previous question was ordered.

The conference report was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report on S. 835.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OSE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

#### FEDERAL COURTS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the Senate bill (S. 2915) to make improvements in the operation and administration of the Federal courts, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I would ask the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) to explain the procedure and what he is offering.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SCOTT. I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the request is to take S. 2915, which improves the Federal Court System by improving its administration and procedures, eliminating operational inefficiencies, and reducing operating expenses, and not to pass the whole bill but to offer an amendment which will make technical corrections, strike section 103, and make modifications to section 309.