

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE), my good friend.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding time to me.

You might wonder: Why is someone from New Mexico even speaking about flood insurance problems? We get about 9 inches of rain a year in my district. Also, it is the high desert. They call it that because we begin at around 3,500 feet of elevation and work up from there.

The way the National Flood Insurance Program has worked out in the past is that people are required, because they happen to be in a flood plain—and we are not dealing with whether or not they should be in a flood plain; we are dealing with the fact that they get no competitive bids—to only get the one government-size bid. And that is never very functional.

So the most egregious circumstance that exists is one that one of my constituents mentioned. He said: I live at the top of a 7,000-foot mountain. The water is down here at about 4,000 feet, 3,000 feet below me, and I have to buy flood insurance.

Well, the fact that he has to buy flood insurance is egregious enough, but the fact that he has to live and pay premiums based on the actuary standards that might exist in Florida is the egregious part. What it does is keeps houses from selling and people from being able to buy houses in New Mexico because they have been defined as being in a flood plain.

□ 1530

If the market were out there, there would be companies that say: Wait. That guy is never going to flood. I can charge him a minute amount and still make money on his policy.

Yet, nothing like that exists. So we find ourselves paying to the same standards as the people in Florida pay when we get 9 inches of rain a year.

So I really appreciate the gentleman's attempt to bring some competition into the workplace. I appreciate Mr. CAPUANO's support of the bill, Mr. MURPHY's underlying co-sponsorship.

I am here to support heartily H.R. 2901, the Flood Insurance Market Parity and Modernization Act.

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, you learn something new every day. I am one of those people. I never expected a guy from New Mexico to be speaking on the flood insurance bill.

I thank Mr. PEARCE for educating me even further.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Massachusetts (Mr. CAPUANO) for his efforts and leadership in this regard.

Look, this isn't the be-all-to-end-all, but it is the best first step that we can

have as a Congress to make sure that we give our consumers affordable options in flood insurance.

As we address the reauthorization of the Biggert-Waters Act next year, this will provide a bridge for bringing the private sector back into the market to show that they are willing to assume some of this risk to the benefit of the consumers.

There are quite a few groups out there that support this particular legislation. To name a few, that includes the Reinsurance Association of America, National Multifamily Housing Council, National Apartment Association, National Taxpayers Union, American Insurance Association, National Association of Realtors, Mortgage Bankers Association, and R Street.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join us and overwhelmingly pass this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HILL). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. ROSS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2901, as amended.

The question was taken. The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE ACT OF 2016

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 223) to authorize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 223

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2016".

SEC. 2. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE.

Section 118(c)(7) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1268(c)(7)) is amended—

(1) by striking subparagraphs (B) and (C) and inserting the following:

"(B) FOCUS AREAS.—In carrying out the Initiative, the Administrator shall prioritize programs and projects, to be carried out in coordination with non-Federal partners, that address the priority areas described in the Initiative Action Plan, including—

"(i) the remediation of toxic substances and areas of concern;

"(ii) the prevention and control of invasive species and the impacts of invasive species;

"(iii) the protection and restoration of near-shore health and the prevention and mitigation of nonpoint source pollution;

"(iv) habitat and wildlife protection and restoration, including wetlands restoration and preservation; and

"(v) accountability, monitoring, evaluation, communication, and partnership activities.

"(C) PROJECTS.—

"(i) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the Initiative, the Administrator shall collaborate with other Federal partners, including the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force established by Executive Order 13340 (69 Fed. Reg. 29043), to select the best combination of programs and projects for Great Lakes protection and restoration using appropriate principles and criteria, including whether a program or project provides—

"(I) the ability to achieve strategic and measurable environmental outcomes that implement the Initiative Action Plan and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement;

"(II) the feasibility of—

"(aa) prompt implementation;

"(bb) timely achievement of results; and

"(cc) resource leveraging; and

"(III) the opportunity to improve interagency, intergovernmental, and inter-organizational coordination and collaboration to reduce duplication and streamline efforts.

"(ii) OUTREACH.—In selecting the best combination of programs and projects for Great Lakes protection and restoration under clause (i), the Administrator shall consult with the Great Lakes States and Indian tribes and solicit input from other non-Federal stakeholders.

"(iii) HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM COORDINATOR.—The Administrator shall designate a point person from an appropriate Federal partner to coordinate, with Federal partners and Great Lakes States, Indian tribes, and other non-Federal stakeholders, projects and activities under the Initiative involving harmful algal blooms in the Great Lakes.";

(2) in subparagraph (D)—

(A) by striking clause (i) and inserting the following:

"(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subparagraph (J)(ii), funds made available to carry out the Initiative shall be used to strategically implement—

"(I) Federal projects;

"(II) projects carried out in coordination with States, Indian tribes, municipalities, institutions of higher education, and other organizations; and

"(III) operations and activities of the Program Office, including remediation of sediment contamination in areas of concern.";

(B) in clause (ii)(I), by striking "(G)(i)" and inserting "(J)(i)"; and

(C) by inserting after clause (ii) the following:

"(iii) AGREEMENTS WITH NON-FEDERAL ENTITIES.—

"(I) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator, or the head of any other Federal department or agency receiving funds under clause (ii)(I), may make a grant to, or otherwise enter into an agreement with, a qualified non-Federal entity, as determined by the Administrator or the applicable head of the other Federal department or agency receiving funds, for planning, research, monitoring, outreach, or implementation of a project selected under subparagraph (C), to support the Initiative Action Plan or the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

"(II) QUALIFIED NON-FEDERAL ENTITY.—For purposes of this clause, a qualified non-Federal entity may include a governmental entity, non-profit organization, institution, or individual.";

and

(3) by striking subparagraphs (E) through (G) and inserting the following:

"(E) SCOPE.—

"(i) IN GENERAL.—Projects may be carried out under the Initiative on multiple levels, including—

"(I) locally;

"(II) Great Lakes-wide; or

"(III) Great Lakes basin-wide.

"(ii) LIMITATION.—No funds made available to carry out the Initiative may be used for any water infrastructure activity (other than a

green infrastructure project that improves habitat and other ecosystem functions in the Great Lakes) for which financial assistance is received—

“(I) from a State water pollution control revolving fund established under title VI;

“(II) from a State drinking water revolving loan fund established under section 1452 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j-12); or

“(III) pursuant to the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014 (33 U.S.C. 3901 et seq.).

“(F) ACTIVITIES BY OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.—Each relevant Federal department or agency shall, to the maximum extent practicable—

“(i) maintain the base level of funding for the Great Lakes activities of that department or agency without regard to funding under the Initiative; and

“(ii) identify new activities and projects to support the environmental goals of the Initiative.

“(G) REVISION OF INITIATIVE ACTION PLAN.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Not less often than once every 5 years, the Administrator, in conjunction with the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force, shall review, and revise as appropriate, the Initiative Action Plan to guide the activities of the Initiative in addressing the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes system.

“(ii) OUTREACH.—In reviewing and revising the Initiative Action Plan under clause (i), the Administrator shall consult with the Great Lakes States and Indian tribes and solicit input from other non-Federal stakeholders.

“(H) MONITORING AND REPORTING.—The Administrator shall—

“(i) establish and maintain a process for monitoring and periodically reporting to the public on the progress made in implementing the Initiative Action Plan;

“(ii) make information about each project carried out under the Initiative Action Plan available on a public website; and

“(iii) provide to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works a yearly detailed description of the progress of the Initiative and amounts transferred to participating Federal departments and agencies under subparagraph (D)(ii).

“(I) INITIATIVE ACTION PLAN DEFINED.—In this paragraph, the term ‘Initiative Action Plan’ means the comprehensive, multi-year action plan for the restoration of the Great Lakes, first developed pursuant to the Joint Explanatory Statement of the Conference Report accompanying the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (Public Law 111-88).

“(J) FUNDING.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this paragraph \$300,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2017 through 2021.

“(ii) LIMITATION.—Nothing in this paragraph creates, expands, or amends the authority of the Administrator to implement programs or projects under—

“(I) this section;

“(II) the Initiative Action Plan; or

“(III) the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. GIBBS) and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and in-

clude extraneous materials on H.R. 223, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to bring up H.R. 223, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2016, introduced by my Ohio colleague, Congressman DAVE JOYCE, on the floor today.

The Great Lakes are an important resource for the United States. More than 30 million people live in the Great Lakes region, and the lakes help support over \$200 billion a year in economic activity.

The Great Lakes Interagency Task Force of Federal agencies was created in 2004 by executive order to help ensure coordination between the Federal, State, and private parties protecting and restoring the Great Lakes.

In 2010, the task force released an action plan as part of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to accelerate efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

Under the Initiative, the Environmental Protection Agency collaborates with other Federal partners, including the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force, to select the best combination of projects and activities for Great Lakes protection and restoration.

In September of 2014, the Federal agencies released an updated Action Plan II, which summarizes the actions that the Federal agencies plan to implement during fiscal years 2015 through 2019.

The Action Plan aims to strategically target the biggest threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem and to accelerate progress toward long-term goals.

H.R. 223 will formally authorize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for 5 years and modifies the program based on recommendations that the Committee received from stakeholders, hearings, and the GAO reports on EPA's activities during multiple years of oversight.

The bill is a positive step forward for the Great Lakes region and the United States as a whole as we continue to prioritize protection and restoration of one of our Nation's most valuable resources.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 223, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2016. This bill extends the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, a program which has had bipartisan support among the Great Lakes delegation for 5 years.

I want to thank my colleagues, Representatives DAVID JOYCE, DAN LIPINSKI, and RICK NOLAN, for their hard work and effort to extend the authorization of appropriations for this program through fiscal year 2021.

These and other members of the Midwest delegation worked diligently to get this legislation to the floor for consideration. I want to thank them all for a job well done.

It accelerates efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes, the largest system of surface freshwater in the world.

Through unprecedented Federal agency coordination and the development of partnerships with the Great Lakes States and local communities, the initiative has already funded more than 2,000 projects to improve water quality, protect and restore native habitats, and prevent and control invasive species in the Great Lakes.

Mr. Speaker, legislation similar to this bill was included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016. However, that authorization was only for 1 fiscal year. This legislation provides for a full 5-year reauthorization.

That timeline is necessary to allow many longer term projects to be planned, capitalized, and completed.

Further, this bill will allow States and local communities to coordinate their efforts to combat harmful algal blooms in the Great Lakes for the first time.

The harmful algal blooms that shut down the drinking water system in Toledo, Ohio, for 3 days in 2014 and that re-emerged in 2015 are still fresh in our memories.

For this reason, I am pleased that this legislation includes the text of H.R. 1923, sponsored by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), to require EPA to appoint a Federal coordinator to work with the Federal agencies, the States, the tribes, and other stakeholders to address the recurring challenges of algal blooms in the Great Lakes.

This coordinator will ensure that GLRI funds are utilized in the most efficient and effective way to reduce nutrients finding their way into the lakes.

Lastly, this bill includes a savings clause to clarify that the GLRI authorization does not expand the regulatory authority of EPA related to restoration of the Great Lakes.

I did not advocate for this provision. However, let's make it clear here today on the floor that this language should not be interpreted as preventing EPA or other Federal agencies from continuing to utilize their existing authorities to address ongoing water quality challenges facing the lakes.

Accordingly, this bill should help ensure that the Federal departments are able to fund work using all the existing tools in the toolbox that cause harmful algal blooms and other pollution and prevent Asian carp from invading the lakes, which would be a disaster, and clean up areas of concern and other high-priority threats.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 223.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my colleague from Ohio

(Mr. JOYCE), who has been a strong advocate for the protection of the Great Lakes and a sponsor of the bill.

Mr. JOYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 223, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2016.

First, I want to thank my good friend, BOB GIBBS of Ohio, for helping me to shepherd this legislation through the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

I also want to thank Chairman SHUSTER for lending a hand and providing guidance on this.

Now, I know I may sound like a broken record, but one of the greatest natural resources and economic powerhouses we have in the United States and the world, for that matter, is the Great Lakes.

I think the resource is incredibly important because, in the future, freshwater is going to be the new gold. And, if you believe that like I do, you understand why the Great Lakes are so important.

Let me give you a few quick facts about this treasure. The Great Lakes contains one-fifth of the world's fresh surface water.

The Great Lakes contain about 85 percent of the fresh surface water in North America.

In the U.S., the Great Lakes account for 95 percent of the fresh surface water. That is a lot of fresh water.

If you took the water and spread it evenly across the Continental United States, the Great Lakes would submerge our country under 9½ feet of water.

These lakes provide more than 35 million people with their drinking water. These Great Lakes support more than 3,500 species of plants and animals.

Studies have shown that more than 1½ million jobs are connected to the five lakes, and they generate \$62 billion in wages.

Now, I know I have uttered those facts around the Capitol like a broken record since I got here, as have others, but these are powerful in telling our story.

An investment in protecting this national treasure is a small down payment in protecting the drinking water for millions of people.

This legislation will continue to make sure that we look at these Great Lakes as a national treasure and coordinate our investment in protecting them. Please stand with me today in sending a message to protect and preserve our Great Lakes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I also thank my colleagues from Ohio. This has been one of the true bipartisan issues that we have dealt with.

So I would like to thank Mr. GIBBS, Mr. JOYCE, Ms. KAPTUR, MARCIA FUDGE, JIM RENACCI, also, PETE VISCLOSKEY, and CHRIS COLLINS.

As you just heard from Mr. JOYCE, the Great Lakes are a huge issue. But, also, for us, Lake Erie is a huge issue. My legislation was put into this bill to require the EPA to appoint a coordinator to address the issue of harmful algal blooms in the Great Lakes.

We have so many groups that are interested, but we need the EPA to help coordinate. Our friends helped get this language into this bill, and I am deeply grateful for that.

These harmful algal blooms affect over half a million Ohioans. It did in 2014. Lake Erie provides clean drinking water for approximately 3 million Ohioans, many of them up and around the Cleveland and Toledo areas.

In August 2014, we had an environmental disaster caused by a harmful algal bloom that left nearly 500,000 residents of Toledo and the western basin without safe drinking water for 3 days.

Lake Erie's tourist industry generates \$12.9 billion in visitor spending, including 119,000 jobs, and contributes \$1.7 billion in Federal, State, and local taxes.

This crisis just continues to build, and it is critical that we start working together to come up with a plan to stem the growing tide.

The Great Lakes' abundance of fresh water is a vital resource and a strategic advantage, and it is critical that we do everything in our power to combat the threats to the Great Lakes that threaten the health and well-being of Ohio and other States surrounding the Great Lakes.

So we must do everything we can. This language helps to make that happen. This language will ensure that there is a coordinator at the EPA to work with the appropriate Federal, State, local, tribal, and foreign governments to address this critical issue affecting the State of Ohio.

As we see the changes in our economy and as we see what is happening out west, we are reminded every single day how critical and how lucky we are, those of us who live in the Great Lakes region, to be able to access this fresh water.

So, again, I thank my friends from Ohio. I thank Mr. SHUSTER from this committee, Mr. DEFAZIO, and others who helped make this happen and for including this language in the bill.

Hon. TIM RYAN,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN RYAN: We write in support of H.R. 1923, your bill requiring the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to appoint a Great Lakes Harmful Algal Bloom Coordinator, which is now part of H.R. 223, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2015. Thank you for your leadership and for being a champion for our Great Lakes, particularly Lake Erie.

Currently there are many efforts underway to reduce the number of harmful algal blooms throughout the Great Lakes, such as in Lake Erie, Saginaw and Green Bays, and Fox River. These efforts, however, are not always coordinated to leverage resources and share vital information. Appointing a coordi-

nator ensures resources are used effectively and efficiently and that federal, state, and local agencies, tribal governments, universities and non-governmental organizations are working collaboratively to reduce phosphorus flowing into the Great Lakes. The first step is a coordinator to ensure everyone is working together to address these complex issues.

A coordinator could not come quickly enough. Lake Erie is the canary in the coal mine of what is to come for freshwater bodies if the nation does not solve this problem. In 2015, Lake Erie experienced a HAB that stretched from Michigan to well past Cleveland and was the biggest bloom on record. In 2014 and 2013, residents in the Toledo area and Carroll Township, respectively, went without tap water because of the toxins produced by these blooms.

As you know, over 30 million people rely on the Great Lakes for their drinking water. We must take action now because the longer we wait, the more serious and expensive this problem becomes.

Please let Kristy Meyer with the Ohio Environmental Council know how we can be helpful in seeing this vital piece of legislation become law.

Sincerely,

Heather Taylor-Miesle, Executive Director, Ohio Environmental Council; Jill Ryan, Executive Director, Freshwater Future; Molly Flanagan, Vice President, Policy, Alliance for the Great Lakes; Cheryl Nenn, Riverkeeper, Milwaukee Riverkeeper; Carol A. Stepien, Professor of Ecology, Director, Lake Erie Science Center, University of Toledo; Howard A. Lerner, Executive Director, Environmental Law & Policy Center; Deanna White, State Director, Clean Water Action Minnesota; Jennifer McKay, Policy Specialist, Tipp of the Mitt Watershed; Melinda Hughes, President, Nature Abounds; Michael Griffin, Executive Director, County Executives of America; George Meyer, Executive Director, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.

Sandy Bihn, Executive Director, Lake Erie Waterkeeper, Inc; Jim Stouffer, President, Lake Erie Improvement Association; Lynn McClure, Midwest Regional Director, National Parks Conservation Association; Mike Shriberg, Regional Executive Director, Great Lakes, National Wildlife Federation; Matt Misiicka, President, Ohio Conservation Federation; Paul Pacholski, President, Lake Erie Charter Boat Association; Ray Stewart, President, Ohio Wetland Association; Nicole Barker, Executive Director, Save the Dunes; Joy Mulinex, Director of Government Relations, Western Reserve Land Conservancy; Indra Frank, MD, MPH, Environmental Health & Water Policy Director, Hoosier Environmental Council; Brian Smith, Associate Executive Director, Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

Rick Novickis, MPH, RS, Director of Environmental Public Health Services, Cuyahoga County Board of Health; J. Meiring Borchers, Watershed Coordinator, Mill Creek Watershed Partnership; Ivan J. Hack, Jr., President, Headwaters Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America; Sr. Rose Therese Nolta, SSps, Justice and Peace Coordinator, Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters; Irene Senn, Coordinator, Religious Coalition for the Great Lakes; Robert Stegmier, National Director, Izaak Walton League of America; Josh Knights, Executive Director, The Nature Conservancy, Ohio Chapter; Christi Carlson, President, Friends of Euclid Creek; Charlotte Jameson, Government Affairs Director, Michigan League of Conservation Voters; Katie Rousseau, Director, Clean Water Supply, Great Lakes, American Rivers; Denny Caneff, Executive Director, River Alliance of Wisconsin; Todd Ambs, Campaign Director, Healing Our Waters—Great Lakes Coalition.

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MILLER), who has fought for years to protect the Great Lakes.

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. I thank the chairman for yielding the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my very, very, strong support for H.R. 223, which is the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2016.

□ 1545

Actually, as the chairman has said, protecting and preserving the Great Lakes has always been a principal advocacy for myself in all the years that I have been in public service, way before I came to the Congress.

I actually grew up on the Great Lakes. I still live on the Great Lakes. My family was in the marina business, so for us, the lakes were more than just a source of recreation, they put food on the table for my family. Like so many from the region, the Great Lakes are such a very proud, proud part of our heritage and of our identity.

Our Great Lakes, as has been said, generate billions of dollars each and every year through the fishing and shipping industries and recreational activities. They account for 85 to 90 percent of this country's freshwater drinking supply and over 20 percent worldwide. There is actually more freshwater under the polar icecaps, but you cannot get at it. You can't get at it to drink it. You can get at the Great Lakes. That is why we are always wanting to protect the Great Lakes.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we have not been the best stewards of these magnificent lakes, and we owe it, I think, to future generations to help assure that they are protected and that they are preserved as well. One of the ways to do that, I believe, is through continued funding and support of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

For years, the administration has proposed budgets that include cuts of millions of dollars to the GLRI, but it is Congress—this Congress—that has always stepped in to recover this funding. That is just one of the reasons that I support this bill, because it does authorize funding at the essential levels—\$300 million—for the next 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, I will also join my colleagues in pointing out that this is truly a bipartisan effort, as you can tell from the people that are on the floor this morning talking about this. Most of us are from the Great Lakes, whether it is Ohio, Michigan, or some of the other Great Lakes States. But it is not just a regional jewel, just a regional treasure, the Great Lakes are a national treasure and deserve to be protected in that way.

Mr. Speaker, over the years I have seen firsthand the impact that GLRI is having on our lakes, whether that is dredging, or beach and shoreline restoration, fighting invasive species, all of these projects are so critical.

Just last fall I was delighted to be part of the unveiling of \$20 million of

GLRI grants for the Clinton River Restoration. The Clinton River, which flows through a major metropolitan area in southeast Michigan, is in desperate need of restoration. So this funding will go a long way in ensuring that the Clinton River is no longer an area of concern and has a thriving ecosystem and a watershed.

Mr. Speaker, God gave us these magnificent, magnificent Great Lakes that have provided us with so much, but we need to be better stewards of them. Quite frankly, we have a lot of making up to do to Mother Nature—a lot of making up. I believe this bill goes a long way in bringing the necessary attention and the resources to a problem that we have long ago identified and need to address.

Mr. Speaker, again, I strongly support H.R. 223, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act, and I urge all my colleagues to support it as well.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE).

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the ranking member, for yielding. I also want to thank the folks on both sides of the aisle for their great work on this Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, particularly my colleague from Michigan, Congresswoman MILLER, who just spoke and who will be leaving Congress at the end of this year. She has been a defender of the Great Lakes for her entire time here. I think it is a fitting part of her legacy that this legislation, hopefully today, will pass this House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, being from Michigan and being a part of the Great Lakes, really growing up around the lakes and in the lakes gives us a lot of pride in my home State. It is the greatest freshwater source, surface freshwater source on the planet, and provides drinking water to over 30 million Americans.

It is a great economic resource as well with great benefits to our entire Nation. It supports millions of jobs, and billions of income every year is derived from the dependence that we have on this great resource. It supports commerce, agriculture, transportation, and tourism. It is home to over 3,500 species of plants and animals. It is an incredible ecosystem.

But we know that the threat to the lakes—the threats—multiple threats to the lakes—are real. From invasive species like Asian carp to toxic chemical contamination and to habitat loss, we have to do everything we can within our power to protect the Great Lakes and combat these really clear present threats.

So I am really proud in a very bipartisan fashion to support full funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to protect and restore that which we have lost in the largest system of fresh water in the world.

In the short time that the GLRI has been in place, we have made progress—

and we know that this is an effective program—addressing longstanding environmental problems confronting the lakes. Over 2,500 individual projects have already been implemented to improve water quality, to clean up contaminated shorelines, to protect and restore native habitats and species, and to control invasive species.

Mr. Speaker, we are here because we know we have to do more. I join my colleagues in urging Congress to join us in supporting the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes and making this a permanent part of American law.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a couple of closing comments. We had some hearings in my subcommittee on this, and part of our oversight responsibility is to make sure that taxpayer dollars are being spent the way they should be. We requested a GAO—a government accountability—report, and I am pleased to announce that the report came back very favorable, that the monies to be invested to protect the Great Lakes is being spent the way it is intended to be.

The only negative that was in the report—which is really minor—was the agencies, the EPA needed to do a better job working together and communicating, and they already had started that when they got the report. So I want to assure our fiscal hawks out there that this money is being spent the way it is intended by Congress, and we got that as part of our oversight duty.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I urge our support of H.R. 223 and to continue to protect and enhance the Great Lakes.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. GIBBS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 223, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AMENDING THE FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT TO REAUTHORIZE THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1523) to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize the National Estuary Program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1523

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,