118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION  
H. R. 5239  

To prohibit the issuance of an interim or final rule that establishes a vessel slowdown zone in the Gulf of Mexico until the Secretary of Commerce completes a study demonstrating that proposed mitigation efforts would have no negative impact on supply chains, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
AUGUST 18, 2023  

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana (for himself, Mr. DUNN of Florida, Mrs. LUNA, Mr. C. SCOTT FRANKLIN of Florida, and Mr. WEBSTER of Florida) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

A BILL  
To prohibit the issuance of an interim or final rule that establishes a vessel slowdown zone in the Gulf of Mexico until the Secretary of Commerce completes a study demonstrating that proposed mitigation efforts would have no negative impact on supply chains, and for other purposes.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
4 This Act may be cited as the “The Gulf of Mexico
5 Commerce Protection Act”.
SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON ISSUANCE OF RULE RELATING TO VESSEL SLOWDOWN ZONE IN GULF OF MEXICO.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall not issue an interim or final rule that establishes a vessel slowdown zone in the Gulf of Mexico until the Secretary of Commerce—

(1) completes a study demonstrating that mitigation protocols developed under subsection (b) would have no net negative impact on supply chains or maritime commerce; and

(2) not later than 60 days after completing such study, submits to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committees on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and Natural Resources of the Senate a report containing the findings of such study.

(b) MITIGATION PROTOCOLS REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, in consultation with the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of the Interior, and with input from affected
stakeholders, shall develop mitigation protocols that make use of any monitoring system designed under section 11303 of the Don Young Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2022 (16 U.S.C. 1391) to direct sector-specific mitigation measures that reduce risk of serious injury and mortality to Rice’s whales in the Gulf of Mexico.

(2) PROHIBITIONS.—The mitigation protocols developed under paragraph (1) may not include any prohibitions on transit at night or implementation of a static vessel slowdown zone.