

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule I, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered or on which the vote is objected to under clause 4 of rule XV.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken at a later time.

MORATORIUM ON LARGE FISHING
VESSELS IN ATLANTIC

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1855) to establish a moratorium on large fishing vessels in Atlantic herring and mackerel fisheries, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1855

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

SECTION 1. MORATORIUM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any provision of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), no large fishing vessel may engage in fishing for Atlantic herring or Atlantic mackerel within the United States exclusive economic zone until—

(1) the National Marine Fisheries Service has completed a new population survey into the abundance of the discrete spawning stocks of Atlantic herring and Atlantic mackerel; and

(2) the Secretary of Commerce has approved and implemented fishery management plans developed by the appropriate regional fishery management council for Atlantic herring and Atlantic mackerel, which specifically allow large fishing vessels to participate in those fisheries.

(b) LARGE FISHING VESSEL DEFINED.—In this section, the term “large fishing vessel”—

(1) except as provided in paragraph (2), means a fishing vessel (as that term is defined in section 3 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1802)) of the United States that is equal to or greater than 165 feet in length overall and has an engine of more than 3,000 horsepower; and

(2) does not include such a vessel that engages only in processing fish harvested by fishing vessels of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] and the gentleman from Hawaii [Mr. ABERCROMBIE] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON].

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. Let me just begin my very brief remarks by thanking the gentleman from Hawaii for his ardent and helpful effort with regard to moving this bill swiftly through the committee and bringing it here to the floor. The gentleman from Hawaii [Mr. ABERCROMBIE] and I have worked very closely together and I want to express my deep appreciation to him at this point.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support, obviously, of H.R. 1855, a simple and straightforward measure that will place a moratorium on large fishing vessels in the Atlantic mackerel and herring fisheries.

Why is congressional intervention and management of these two species needed? Well, herring and mackerel are the two fisheries on the east coast that have not been fished to death yet. Mackerel, the mackerel world market and the prices have increased substantially because the eastern European countries can no longer depend on Government support and because the demand for mackerel and herring in those societies has grown to an unprecedented level.

This has created an economic reason to fish on these two species and it has created therefore new fishing pressure.

Herring has just recently recovered from being badly overfished. This recovery caused serious pain among the New England fishermen who had to find an alternative source of fish in order for them to survive. They increasingly turned to cod and haddock at Georges Bank, which has since been overfished and that fish stock has now crashed. Now herring is being targeted once again.

Now it looks as though the Atlantic herring and mackerel fisheries are faced with a new disastrous threat. Large fishing vessels are poised to enter these fisheries. High prices and the apparent abundance of these species has attracted the attention of fishermen and businessmen throughout the world who have responded by investing in large fishing vessels to harvest this American resource for sale overseas because there is no market here. The market is overseas.

The capacity of each of these vessels exceeds 50 metric tons per year. That is a large fishing vessel, to say the least. One such vessel plans to begin harvesting this fall. It is therefore imperative that we establish safeguards to prevent another fishing disaster like those suffered by redfish, shark, striped bass, as well as cod and haddock, which I mentioned before.

There are a number of things that we need to point out. Fact No. 1, we do not know with any certainty how many fish, that is, mackerel and herring, there are. The National Marine Fisheries Service, which we know as NMFS, has not done a stock assessment specifically on herring and mackerel stocks. The only information we have on these species is from a complex large pelagic survey that was done and incidentally, just incidentally, mentions herring and mackerel. Therefore, fact No. 1 is that we do not know how many fish there are.

Fact No. 2, the moratorium is temporary in nature but it is also an emergency measure. The moratorium on large fishing vessels will only last as long as it takes the National Marine Fisheries Service to do a separate stock assessment on herring and mack-

erel to find out how many fish there are, two tremendously important east coast fisheries. Imagine that, knowing how many fish there are before we begin to take them in large numbers.

□ 1415

So fact No. 2, we need to do stock assessments before additional fishing pressure is brought to bear on these species.

Fact No. 3, the councils that care for these fisheries or regulate these fisheries are moving quickly to preserve them as well, but they need more time. The mid-Atlantic and New England fisheries management councils have passed resolutions and motions to protect these fisheries from overharvest. The councils need the time to react to what could be a sudden unsustainable increase in the harvest. This bill gives them the time to develop fishery management plans which do not exist at this time.

Fact No. 4, the National Marine Fisheries Service has guessed that the mackerel fishery can sustain only about 150,000 metric tons of annual harvest. Three of these large vessels, which are poised to enter this fishery, could easily meet and possibly exceed this harvest within a single year. It is not clear that the resource can withstand this fishing effort and remain healthy and viable. Therefore, we need to take care of the management plan before this fishing pressure starts.

The National Marine Fisheries Service seems content to wait until the stocks crash before taking action to protect these fisheries. That is why we need this moratorium. As someone who has witnessed the pain and suffering experienced by fishermen from New England, I do not believe that we should fish now and pay later. We must end this cycle of destroying our resources without knowing how much fishing pressure they can endure. Help to conserve the Atlantic herring and mackerel stocks by voting “yes” on this bill, H.R. 1855.

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

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

(Mr. ABERCROMBIE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to thank the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] for his kind remarks. I would like, in addition, to cite the work of the staff with regard to this and other bills, Mr. Speaker. It is outstanding work always.

Mr. Speaker, the remarks of the gentleman from New Jersey are such that I think they make a compelling case in and of themselves. I would like not to reiterate them but to amplify them somewhat.

The temporary moratorium on the entry of large fishing vessels into these two fisheries will provide the East