

which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 708, the legislation just passed.

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

There was no objection.

ASIAN ELEPHANT CONSERVATION ACT OF 1997

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1787) to assist in the conservation of Asian elephants by supporting and providing financial resources for the conservation programs of nations within the range of Asian elephants and projects of persons with demonstrated expertise in the conservation of Asian elephants, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1787

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 "Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) Asian elephant populations in nations within the range of Asian elephants have continued to decline to the point that the long-term survival of the species in the wild is in serious jeopardy.

(2) The Asian elephant is listed as an endangered species under section 4 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and under appendix I of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

(3) Because the challenges facing the conservation of Asian elephants are so great, resources to date have not been sufficient to cope with the continued loss of habitat and the consequent diminution of Asian elephant populations.

(4) The Asian elephant is a flagship species for the conservation of tropical forest habitats in which it is found and provides the consequent benefit from such conservation to numerous other species of wildlife including many other endangered species.

(5) Among the threats to the Asian elephant in addition to habitat loss are population fragmentation, human-elephant conflict, poaching for ivory, meat, hide, bones and teeth, and capture for domestication.

(6) To reduce, remove, or otherwise effectively address these threats to the long-term viability of populations of Asian elephants in the wild will require the joint commitment and effort of nations within the range of Asian elephants, the United States and other countries, and the private sector.

SEC. 3. PURPOSES.

The purposes of this Act are the following:

(1) To perpetuate healthy populations of Asian elephants.

(2) To assist in the conservation and protection of Asian elephants by supporting the conservation programs of Asian elephant range states and the CITES Secretariat.

(3) To provide financial resources for those programs.

SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) The term "CITES" means the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, signed on March 3, 1973, and its appendices.

(2) The term "conservation" means the use of methods and procedures necessary to bring Asian elephants to the point at which there are sufficient populations in the wild to ensure that the species does not become extinct, including all activities associated with scientific resource management, such as conservation, protection, restoration, acquisition, and management of habitat; research and monitoring of known populations; assistance in the development of management plans for managed elephant ranges; CITES enforcement; law enforcement through community participation; translocation of elephants; conflict resolution initiatives; and community outreach and education.

(3) The term "Fund" means the Asian Elephant Conservation Fund established under section 6(a).

(4) The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(5) The term "Administrator" means the Administrator of the Agency for International Development.

SEC. 5. ASIAN ELEPHANT CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, subject to the availability of funds and in consultation with the Administrator, shall use amounts in the Fund to provide financial assistance for projects for the conservation of Asian elephants for which final project proposals are approved by the Secretary in accordance with this section.

(b) PROJECT PROPOSAL.—Any relevant wildlife management authority of a nation within the range of Asian elephants whose activities directly or indirectly affect Asian elephant populations, the CITES Secretariat, or any person with demonstrated expertise in the conservation of Asian elephants, may submit to the Secretary to project proposal under this section. Each proposal shall include the following:

(1) The name of the individual responsible for conducting the project.

(2) A succinct statement of the purposes of the project.

(3) A description of the qualifications of the individuals who will conduct the project.

(4) An estimate of the funds and time required to complete the project.

(5) Evidence of support of the project by appropriate governmental entities of countries in which the project will be conducted, if the Secretary determines that the support is required for the success of the project.

(6) Information regarding the source and amount of matching funding available to the applicant.

(7) Any other information the Secretary considers to be necessary for evaluating the eligibility of the project for funding under this Act.

(c) PROJECT REVIEW AND APPROVAL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Within 30 days after receiving a final project proposal, the Secretary shall provide a copy of the proposal to the Administrator. The Secretary shall review each final project proposal to determine if it meets the criteria set forth in subsection (d).

(2) CONSULTATION; APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL.—Not later than 6 months after receiving a final project proposal, and subject to the availability of funds, the Secretary, after consulting with the Administrator, shall—

(A) request written comments on the proposal from each country within which the project is to be conducted;

(B) after requesting those comments, approve or disapprove the proposal; and

(C) provide written notification of that approval or disapproval to the person who submitted the proposal, the Administrator, and each of those countries.

(d) CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL.—The Secretary may approve a final project proposal under this section if the project will enhance programs for conservation of Asian elephants by assisting efforts to—

(1) implement conservation programs;

(2) address the conflicts between humans and elephants that arise from competition for the same habitat;

(3) enhance compliance with provisions of CITES and laws of the United States or a foreign country that prohibit or regulate the taking or trade of Asian elephants or regulate the use and management of Asian elephant habitat;

(4) develop sound scientific information on the condition of Asian elephant habitat, Asian elephant population numbers and trends, or the threats to such habitat, numbers, or trends; or

(5) promote cooperative projects on those topics with other foreign governments, affected local communities, nongovernmental organizations, or others in the private sector.

(e) PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY.—To the maximum extent practical, in determining whether to approve project proposals under this section, the Secretary shall give consideration to projects which will enhance sustainable integrated conservation development programs to ensure effective, long-term conservation of Asian elephants.

(f) PROJECT REPORTING.—Each person who receives assistance under this section for a project shall provide periodic reports, as the Secretary considers necessary, to the Secretary and the Administrator. Each report shall include all information required by the Secretary, after consulting with the Administrator, for evaluating the progress and success of the project.

(g) MATCHING FUNDS.—In determining whether to approve project proposals under this section, the Secretary shall give priority to those projects for which there exists some measure of matching funds.

(h) LIMITATION ON USE FOR CAPTIVE BREEDING.—Amounts provided as a grant under this Act may not be used for captive breeding of Asian elephants other than for release in the wild.

SEC. 6. ASIAN ELEPHANT CONSERVATION FUND.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the general fund of the Treasury a separate account to be known as the "Asian Elephant Conservation Fund", which shall consist of amounts deposited into the Fund by the Secretary of the Treasury under subsection (b).

(b) DEPOSITS INTO THE FUND.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall deposit into the Fund—

(1) all amounts received by the Secretary in the form of donations under subsection (d); and

(2) other amounts appropriated to the Fund.

(c) USE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary may use amounts in the Fund without further appropriation to provide assistance under section 5.

(2) ADMINISTRATION.—Of amounts in the Fund available for each fiscal year, the Secretary may use not more than 3 percent to administer the Fund.

(d) ACCEPTANCE AND USE OF DONATIONS.—The Secretary may accept and use donations to provide assistance under section 5. Amounts received by the Secretary in the form of donations shall be transferred to the Secretary of the Treasury for deposit into the Fund.

SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated to the Fund \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002 to carry out this Act, which may remain available until extended.

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. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

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

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I introduced H.R. 1787, the Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997, along with the gentleman from Hawaii [Mr. ABERCROMBIE] and 17 other Members on June 4, 1997.

The fundamental purposes of this legislation are twofold: First, to create an Asian elephant conservation fund; and, second, to authorize the Congress to appropriate up to \$5 million per year to this fund to finance various conservation projects for each of the next 5 fiscal years.

The legislation is modeled after the highly successful African Elephant Conservation Act of 1988 and the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994. The new authorization would be separate from those funds appropriated for African elephants or for rhinos or tigers.

Under the terms of H.R. 1787, the Secretary of the Interior would carefully evaluate the merits of each proposed conservation project, select those that best enhance the future of the Asian elephant, and give priority to those projects whose sponsors demonstrate the ability to match some portion of the Federal funds. In addition, the bill stipulates the Secretary may accept donations to assist Asian elephants and shall spend no more than 3 percent of the amount appropriated to administer the fund.

Unless immediate steps are taken to conserve this magnificent animal, it will surely continue to disappear from much, if not all, of its traditional habitat. We cannot allow the Asian elephant, which has such a direct impact on so many other species, like the clouded leopard, the rhinos and tigers, to become extinct. The goal of H.R. 1787 is to stop the decline and hopefully rebuild the population stocks of this irreplaceable species by financing, with a small amount of Federal money, a limited number of conservation projects.

While not an exact list, it is likely that these projects would include efforts to monitor known populations of Asian elephants, develop improved conservation management plans, and educate the public about the value of this so-called flagship species.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the tireless dedication of our former colleague, Andy Ireland. Due to his inspirational leadership, Feld Entertainment has played a major role in help-

ing to move this legislation forward. This company, which has been a leader in Asian elephant conservation and husbandry for decades, is motivated by the goal of ensuring that there are Asian elephants living in the world, and will be for the next century.

Obviously, I am going to urge a "yea" vote on this, but before I do that, let me pay particular thanks to our staff for helping move this bill forward this morning, and in particular a young lady by the name of Sharon McKenna, who is not able to be here with us today, as she is home taking care of her brand new little baby, Jackson. So we wish Sharon and her husband Mike, and Jackson, all the best, and thank her for the great work that she has done on this bill.

Madam Speaker, let me just say that when I introduced this bill with the gentleman from Hawaii, who has joined us in the Chamber, I think we both were deluged with a number of questions as to why in the world a Congressman from Hawaii and a Congressman from New Jersey should devote the time and energy that we have to trying to save an Asian species, the Asian elephant.

The answer to that is quite simple, and I think it was brought to bear quite clearly here today by the previous speakers, the gentleman from Alaska [Mr. YOUNG] and the gentleman from Idaho [Mrs. CHENOWETH], who were talking about the controversies surrounding the issue of global warming and making the point very clearly that this world's forests, not just this Nation's forests, but this world's forests are vital in the fight against global warming.

This species, the Asian elephant, has been named a flagship species because it is easy to see. It is easy to see it disappearing. And one can quite readily draw the conclusion that one of the reasons it is disappearing is because of its disappearing habitat, the forests in which it lives.

So by concentrating on this magnificent species that men and women and boys and girls all around the world recognize and have grown to love as one of God's creatures that we all recognize, by using it as a flagship species, so-called, we draw attention and educate ourselves as a world people about the importance of not only the Asian elephant but the African elephant as well and rhinos and tigers and the forests in which they reside.

□ 1415

And so to the extent that we can set an example here today by passing this bill and working to save the Asian elephant in this case, we will also be successful in doing our part in the effort to combat global warming.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I am delighted to be here today, particularly in the company of

the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON], my good friend. I too want to pay tribute not just to him and his great leadership on this issue but to the especially strong staff support we have received along the way with the enactment of this bill.

Madam Speaker, I am just getting to the floor now because we have had the opportunity over the past couple of hours to be meeting on the questions of travel, tourism and the world, not only in relation to the United States but in relation one to another as people throughout the world.

Madam Speaker, I cannot emphasize enough to Members that in paying particular attention to this species as covered under the Asian Elephant Conservation Act, we are taking a giant step forward in seeing to it not only that we respect the ecological consequences for the Asian elephant as such, but that we recognize that in this context, the people of the world are coming to know that we are all interrelated, and we are very, very hopeful that we will be able to fund as a result of this act partnerships, international partnerships, that will result in people being able to view the Asian elephant, to understand through the conservation of the Asian elephant its relationship to ecological balance, environmental balance in South Asia and that this is beneficial on a planetary basis when all of the species of the world understand their interrelationship.

This is then a modest step in the effort to protect the existing Asian elephant herds from multiple sources of danger, including poaching for meat, hides, teeth and bones as well as capture for domestication and the encroachment of humans and civilization, so-called.

Madam Speaker, the population of Asian elephants as has been pointed out, has been dwindling steadily and now numbers roughly 40,000 animals. It is an incredible thing to contemplate, as we did in the course of our examination in the committee hearings, what such a relatively small number of great animals and of course I must say parenthetically, Madam Speaker, that my respect for and admiration for the diversity of life on this planet was only enhanced by the hearings that we had. This is indeed one of God's most magnificent creatures and indeed represents something unique. Not everyone is aware that the Asian elephant has been a partner with humankind throughout all of the thousands of years of its existence. That relationship is now threatened by the advance of modern life.

Maybe advance is almost the wrong word, Madam Speaker. But nonetheless we are realizing more and more that this great creature of South Asia, the Asian elephant, represented a true symbiosis between humankind and the animal kingdom that is now threatened. The numbers are less than 10 percent of the numbers of African elephants in the wild. I think that that is a very sobering statistic.

The African elephant of course has received great publicity. It also of course is magnificent in its presentation of self in the wild and has attracted the imagination and admiration of people throughout the world. The Asian elephant being a blue collar animal, a working animal, a domesticated animal working in close proximity with human beings, has been ignored in the process.

So this legislation will help prevent the eventual extinction of the Asian elephant as an endangered species. The future of these magnificent animals in the wild is in clear jeopardy. H.R. 1787 authorizes \$5 million to fund projects crucial to the survival of the species. Our goals are to assist and support the conservation of elephant range, as the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] has enunciated so clearly and to support the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Although wild Asian elephants are scattered across 13 Asian countries, there are only 4 remaining herds containing 1,000 or more animals.

Douglas H. Chadwick, a distinguished and honored scientist and author, wrote of these animals:

Elephants are one of those animals by which we define the grandeur of creation. No larger life forms walk our earth and precious few are more intelligent. Elephants are more than just a part of the extraordinary variety of the plants and animals found in Asia's tropical forest. Elephants are one of the main reasons that the genetic bounty is there in the first place with the potential to provide humanity with new sources of food, fiber and pharmaceutical products. Elephants distribute seeds of perhaps one-third of all tropical trees. In some cases elephants are the only known agents of dispersal. To save Asian elephants is to save one of the principal shapers of biological diversity. To maintain habitat is to maintain the resources that enrich human communities over the long run.

I am absolutely certain, Madam Speaker, speaking parenthetically that with the expansion of the Asian elephant habitat and with their preservation and conservation, we will see enormous increases in travel and tourism and by extension the awareness of the items that I am speaking of. Going back, then, in my quotation, "To pass an Asian Elephant Conservation Act would be one of the most foresighted and yet practical, cost-effective things we can do for the benefit of Americans, people throughout Asia, and the world we all share."

H.R. 1787 received overwhelming support in the Committee on Resources, again under the leadership of the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON]. I was pleased to be an original cosponsor of the bill. Not only does H.R. 1787 enjoy strong bipartisan support in the House, Madam Speaker, but it has also been endorsed by such diverse groups that bears repeating, the American Zoological and Aquarium Association, the World Wildlife Fund, Wildlife Preservation Trust International, the Sierra Club, and Feld Entertainment, emphasizing the partnership we have in the

private sector. Feld Entertainment is the owner of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus.

It is clear that if we are to prevent the extinction of the Asian elephant, a number of coordinated and visible activities must be undertaken by the international community and host-range nations. I believe it bears repeating, Madam Speaker, as to what they might be:

Protection of the remaining elephant populations and their habitat from further loss and degradation by establishing and managing special protected areas;

Promotion of coexistence between people and elephants by developing and implementing sound management practices that would prevent or reduce conflict;

Promotion of effective law enforcement through participation of local communities;

Reduction of captures from the wild, and extension of care and humane management of the remaining domesticated population;

Madam Speaker, I believe it has been stated but I believe again bears repeating that the Asian elephant as a participant in society as a domesticated work elephant, I was going to say workhorse, I guess is the equivalent, is now finding itself in the situation of being unemployed.

The work elements associated with the Asian elephant are disappearing much as the workhorse did, as the great workhorses that my grandfather was associated with as a teamster in Buffalo, NY, the great eight-horse hitchers that the great beer wagons that we see advertised now with Budweiser, they were working animals. My grandfather was the manager of the stables that carried baked goods on great wagons throughout Buffalo for the then existing Hall's Bakery. So horses, great workhorses, were displaced by engines, by the internal combustion engine. The same thing is happening to the Asian elephant. The elephants who worked under these circumstances need to be taken care of, need humane management and treatment, and this bill will help agencies and individuals and groups interested in this in completing that task. Finally, restoration of the congenial relationship that previously existed between people and elephants through education and awareness programs. And of course this is where travel and tourism can play a great role.

Many groups and individuals contributed to the development of the bill. The Tiger and Rhinoceros Conservation Act is one to be cited. It would be administered by the Secretary of the Interior after consultation with the Administrator of AID. Instead of focusing on remedies appropriate for trade-related conservation issues, this bill emphasizes remedies that would address the human-elephant conflict resolutions that prevails throughout the Asian elephant's natural range. I think

I have already made reference, Madam Speaker, to the African elephant and I am particularly grateful to the gentleman from Alaska [Mr. YOUNG], the chair of our committee, who has been instrumental in working with the preservation and conservation of the African elephant and who realized that the Asian elephant emphasis that we have in this bill is an appropriate next step to take.

The purpose then of H.R. 1787 is to assist initiatives in the Asian elephant range nations as well as regional and national agencies and organizations whose activities directly or indirectly promote Asian elephant habitat conservation. Then the bill would be funded in a manner so as not to affect funds currently earmarked for the African Elephant Conservation Act and the Rhino and Tiger Act. The legislation would specify that support would be provided for projects that would directly support and promote wild elephant management practices such as monitoring population trends of known populations, assessing the movement and the annual ranging patterns of known populations. We would emphasize law enforcement through community participation, develop management plans for managed elephant ranges, translocation of elephants, conflict resolution initiatives and community outreach and education. It specifically authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to fund projects addressing the use of domesticated elephants as such use relates to conservation of Asian elephants in the wild. It provides for multiplying the impact of funding by authorizing priority to be given projects which have matching funds from private sector sources.

In that instance I, too, want to add my congratulations and grateful thanks to our colleague Andy Ireland, who brought this issue to our attention in an extraordinarily comprehensive way and in that context, Madam Speaker, I want to conclude by urging all of our colleagues to take advantage of the pioneering work that was done in the Committee on Resources previously with respect to conservation of the great animals in Africa and Asia and add to it then this great and magnificent representation of the symbiotic relationship of humankind and the animal world in the Asian elephant.

Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from American Samoa [Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA].

□ 1430

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Hawaii [Mr. ABERCROMBIE] for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, I am delighted to be a cosponsor of this piece of legislation, and commend the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON], the chairman of the Subcommittee on Wildlife and Fisheries.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Hawaii [Mr.

ABERCROMBIE] for introducing H.R. 1787, the Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997. Like the similar African Elephant Conservation Act of 1988, and the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994, the fund created by this act should provide valuable financial assistance to programs protecting a keystone species which is greatly threatened throughout its range.

This bill will focus projects toward those problems which most threaten Asian elephants: habitat loss and human-elephant conflicts. This bill also supports conservation programs within range states, which is the best way to perpetuate healthy populations of Asian elephants in the wild.

Furthermore, this act will help provide the infrastructure necessary to limit Asian elephant poaching activity, which threatens the population that now numbers only one-tenth its previous level.

The Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997 also contains provisions that encourage efficiency and public participation in wildlife conservation programs. The act works to obtain the greatest leverage for U.S. taxpayer dollars by directing that preference for funding be given to those projects that will generate matching funds in cooperative projects.

Additionally, the Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997 promotes public involvement in our efforts to protect this species by permitting the Secretary of the Interior, through the Fish and Wildlife Service, to accept and use private donations to the fund.

This proposed bill, Madam Speaker, is but one example of the environmental leadership that is needed to protect threatened and endangered species, both at home and overseas. H.R. 1787 deserves our support, and I urge our colleagues' support for its adoption.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, as a cosponsor of H.R. 1787, I rise in support of this legislation to create an Asian elephant conservation fund.

This measure is modeled after the highly successful African Elephant Conservation Act of 1988 and the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994. It will authorize up to \$5 million per year to be appropriated to the Department of the Interior to fund various projects to conserve the African elephant.

This flagship species of the Asian continent is in grave danger of extinction. According to international experts, there are less than 45,000 Asian elephants living in the wild. On a daily basis, these animals face the loss of their forest habitat, poachers who kill them for their bones, hide, ivory, and meat, capture for use in Burma's timber industry, and conflicts between elephants and man. While Asian elephants are found in 13 countries in South and Southeast Asia, nearly half of the wild population reside in India. Unless immediate steps are taken to help conserve this species, it will continue to disappear from its historic habitat.

By enacting this legislation, it is my hope that projects will be funded to update census figures, assist in antipoaching efforts, translocate highly endangered elephants, and

educate the public on why it is important to protect Asian elephants.

This small but critical investment of U.S. taxpayer money will be matched by private funds and will significantly improve the likelihood that wild Asian elephants will exist in the 21st century.

We should not allow this magnificent animal to disappear from this planet. H.R. 1787 will not solve all of the problems facing the Asian elephant but it is a positive step in the right direction.

I urge an aye vote on the Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997.

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Mr. SAXTON and Mr. ABERCROMBIE for introducing H.R. 1787, the Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997. Unfortunately, it appears as if the programs this legislation will promote are needed now more than ever.

Many of us have expressed our concerns about the decision made at the recent Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora [CITES] to downlist several populations of African elephants. At that meeting, which I attended, many representatives from elephant range states expressed their concern about the downlisting, fearing that it would send a signal to poachers that the ivory trade was about to resume. Sadly, it now seems their concerns were justified. Several of the elephant range states have experienced increased levels of poaching leading up to, and following the CITES decision, which is exactly why some of these range states opposed the downlisting proposal.

The Asian elephant has not escaped this slaughter. At the CITES conference, the representative from India stated his country's opposition to the downlisting because of the impact it would have upon the elephants in that country which is home to 50 percent of the Asian elephant population. In June and July of this year—following the CITES conference—poachers killed 20 Asian elephants in India, raising India's total poaching numbers to 52 for the first half of 1997. This is an increase in poaching activity over recent years, and when combined with habitat loss and other factors, does not bode well for the future of Asian elephants.

The Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997 deserves our support. H.R. 1787 will support projects that focus on protecting wild populations of Asian elephants against poaching, habitat loss, and human-elephant conflicts. This legislation promotes both fiscal efficiency and public participation by working to obtain the greatest leverage for U.S. taxpayer dollars by giving funding priority to those projects that will generate matching funds and cooperative projects. Furthermore, based upon the experiences of the similarly structured African Elephant Conservation Act of 1988 and the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994, the programs funded by this legislation should prove highly effective.

Our own Endangered Species Act recognizes the critical importance that protecting species' habitat plays in the long term survival of that species. Our goal should be to restore healthy populations of all animals in the wild by fighting poaching and protecting habitat—H.R. 1787 is a good start for doing this for Asian elephants.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the Asian Elephant Con-

servation Act (H.R. 1787). This important piece of legislation will continue America's commitment to worldwide elephant conservation. I would also like to congratulate Chairman SAXTON for introducing and promoting this important legislation.

H.R. 1787 will authorize the Asian elephant conservation fund to receive \$5 million each fiscal year from fiscal year 1998 to 2002. This contribution will be matched with private funds from outside interest groups committed to preserving Asian elephants. Our investment will coordinate and leverage private sector support for elephant conservation and fund projects that focus on antipoaching efforts, elephant population research, efforts to mitigate elephant-human conflict, habitat restorations, and identifying new techniques for elephant management. The creation of this important and successful program will continue to promote America's leadership to conserve and restore elephant herds in their native habitat. The future survival of Asian elephants depends upon America's leadership, and our small but crucial amount of financial support.

The Asian elephant conservation fund is based on the very successful African Elephant Conservation Act [AECA], which has been responsible for rescuing African elephants from the path to extinction. The AECA has stabilized elephant populations across Africa, tremendously slowed poaching, and provided important incentives to native people to preserve elephants.

The need for this legislation is clear. Asian elephant populations living in the wild have fallen dramatically. Right now only about 40,000 animals exist in the wild. The major cause for this decrease is shrinking habitat and expanding human populations. However, passage of this act will reverse the downward trend to elephant populations. This fund will help local villagers, who often live in fear of elephants, to coexist and benefit from the long-term conservation of elephants. This is an important step. Over time, this will reduce the high cost of conservation and save elephants from extinction.

Madam Speaker, the African Elephant Conservation Act has been a tremendous success. Let us now authorize the Asian elephant conservation fund and continue America's leadership to promote worldwide elephant conservation. I encourage all my colleagues to vote for H.R. 1787.

Mr. GILMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1787, the Asian Elephant Conservation Act. I ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation was referred to our Committee on International Relations, but in the interest of advancing it to early passage we waived our right to consider it.

I want to thank the sponsor of the bill, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] and the gentleman from Hawaii [Mr. ABERCROMBIE] and the leadership of the Committee on Resources, the chairman, the gentleman from Alaska [Mr. YOUNG] and the ranking minority member, the gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER].

As has already been explained, this bill sets up a system whereby the Administrator of the Agency for International Development and the Secretary of the Interior shall look for ways to help preserve the precious heritage of Asian Elephants. Not only are Asian elephants endangered—and deserving of protection—but

they are especially important from a cultural and economic point of view to Americans and Asians alike.

I want to salute the many organizations that had a role in moving this bill, such as the World Wildlife Fund, Safari Club International, the Sierra Club, and our former colleague Andy Ireland of Feld Enterprises. The bill was supported by representatives of the Indian Institute of Science and the Wildlife Preservation Trust International. The model of protection in this bill is appropriate, flexible, and carries a reasonable cost.

Madam Speaker, I reiterate my support for this important legislation and yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I believe everyone who wishes to speak on the issue has done so, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. EMERSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1787, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on H.R. 1787, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

CONCURRING IN THE SENATE AMENDMENTS TO H. CON. RES. 8, REGARDING CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEMS

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 8) recognizing the significance of maintaining the health and stability of coral reef ecosystems.

The Clerk read as follows:

Senate Amendments:

Strike out all after the resolving clause and insert:

That the Congress recognizes the significance of maintaining the health and stability of coral reef ecosystems, by—

- (1) promoting comprehensive stewardship for coral reef ecosystems;
- (2) discouraging unsustainable fisheries or other practices that are harmful to coral reefs and human health;
- (3) encouraging research, monitoring, and assessment of and education on coral reef ecosystems;
- (4) improving the coordination of coral reef efforts and activities of Federal agencies, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and industry; and

(5) promoting preservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources worldwide.

Strike out the preamble and insert:

Whereas coral reefs are among the world's most biologically diverse and productive marine habitats, and are often described as the tropical rain forest of the oceans;

Whereas healthy coral reefs provide the basis for subsistence, commercial fisheries, and coastal and marine tourism and are of vital economic importance to coastal States and territories of the United States including Florida, Hawaii, Georgia, Texas, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;

Whereas healthy coral reefs function as natural, regenerating coastal barriers, protecting shorelines and coastal areas from high waves, storm surges, and accompanying losses of human life and property

Whereas the scientific community has long established that coral reefs are subject to a wide range of natural and anthropogenic threats;

Whereas a wide variety of destructive fishing practices, including the use of cyanide, other poisons, surfactants, and explosives, are contributing to the global decline of coral reef ecosystems;

Whereas the United States has taken measures to protect national coral reef resources through the designation and management of several marine protected areas, containing reefs of the Flower Garden Banks in the Gulf of Mexico, the Florida Keys in south Florida, and offshore Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa;

Whereas the United States, acting through its agencies, has established itself as a global leader in coral reef stewardship by launching the International Coral Reef Initiative and by maintaining professional networks for the purposes of sharing knowledge and information on coral reefs, furnishing near real-time data collected at coral reef sites, providing a repository for historical data relating to coral reefs, and making substantial contributions to the general fund of coral reef knowledge; and

Whereas 1997 has been declared the "International Year of the Reef" by the coral reef research community and over 40 national and international scientific, conservation, and academic organizations: Now, therefore, be it

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. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

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

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, on April 23rd, the House of Representatives unanimously approved House Concurrent Resolution 8, a resolution that I introduced along with my colleague, the gentleman from Hawaii [Mr. ABERCROMBIE].

This measure expresses strong support for research, monitoring, and education related to the coral reef ecosystems. Healthy coral reefs help provide numerous benefits to the United States and other nations. For example, coral reefs support important com-

mercial and recreational fisheries, as well as a large tourism and vacation industry, provide natural storm protection in coastal communities, and have recently become an important frontier for biomedical research.

The other body has now approved an amended version of House Concurrent Resolution 8. The amendment takes note of the alarming damage to coral reefs caused by destructive fishing practices, as unbelievable as the use of cyanide and dynamite in fishing in some areas of the globe. It further expresses the sense of Congress that international action to eliminate these unbelievably harmful practices is much needed.

I believe that this amendment is not only acceptable, but strengthens the resolution, and I am sorry that I did not think about it to begin with.

Madam Speaker, I urge the House to approve this measure as amended, and complete Congressional recognition of the importance of the coral reef ecosystems and the need to conserve them. I urge my colleagues to vote "aye".

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, before I rise in strong support of the Senate amendments to House Concurrent Resolution No. 8, I want to assure the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] that in the statement of the gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER], that I submitted on the Asian elephant resolution, that it did not contain a statement, as rumored, that while he was in favor of increasing the number of Asian elephants in South Asia, that he was for decreasing the number of elephants on the Committee on Resources.

Madam Speaker, this resolution brings much-needed attention to the crisis that coral reefs are facing worldwide. I commend yet once again the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] for his leadership in introducing and passing House Concurrent Resolution No. 8, and for focusing on the subcommittee's attention on the value of and threats to coral reefs.

I also want to praise the efforts of the ranking member, the gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER] for his concern over cyanide fishing and the need to promote sustainable coral reef fisheries, ideas incorporated in the Senate amendments to the resolution.

Coral reefs, as I have every opportunity to observe, being from Hawaii, Madam Speaker, are vital to the environment and the economy of many islands and coastal States, territories, and nations. They are among the most biologically diverse and productive ecosystems on Earth, rivaling the tropical rain forests on land. The hard structure of the reef is built up over thousands of years by the secretions of tiny living coral animals, so a coral reef is truly a living structure. As a