\*GROUPS\*

April XX, 2019

**RE: Please support H.R. 1568, the SAVE Right Whales Act**

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our millions of members and activists nationwide, we strongly urge you to vote yes on the bipartisan SAVE Right Whales Act, H.R. 1568— vital legislation that would support the recovery of the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale.

We are at a pivotal point in the history of the North Atlantic right whale: fewer than 420 remain on earth, and no more than 100 of those are reproductively active females. If we fail to act, the North Atlantic right whale could be effectively extinct within our lifetime.[[1]](#endnote-1)However, if we take strong, immediate action, we can reasonably expect this population to survive and rebound.

The bipartisan SAVE Right Whales Act would support the recovery of this iconic species by addressing the two greatest threats to right whales: entanglement and ship strikes. Entanglement in fishing gear is the most frequent cause of death for North Atlantic right whales, causing more than 80 percent of diagnosable deaths.[[2]](#endnote-2) Entanglements not only cause deaths, but severely impair the whales’ ability to produce calves.[[3]](#endnote-3) Ship collisions are the North Atlantic right whale’s second major cause of death and serious injury. While tremendous gains have been made in preventing ship strikes,[[4]](#endnote-4) research is urgently needed to develop detection and avoidance measures to help prevent right whale collisions with vessels.

The SAVE Right Whales Act would support efforts by the U.S. fishing and shipping industries to develop solutions to minimize the impacts of human activities on the North Atlantic right whale. Specifically, the bill would establish a new grant program at the Department of Commerce to fund collaborative projects between states, nongovernmental organizations, and members of the fishing and shipping industries to develop, test, and implement new technologies and other strategies to reduce entanglements and vessel collisions. The bill would provide a sustained source of federal funding—$5 million annually over 10 years—to support this urgently-needed action.

Without action, the North Atlantic right whale may be effectively extinct within just a few decades. Congress has the opportunity to reverse this trend and prevent the extinction of this iconic species by supporting the SAVE Right Whales Act. We strongly urge you to do so.

Sincerely,

1. Pennisi, E. (2017, December 08). The North Atlantic right whale faces extinction. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/11/north-atlantic-right-whale-faces-extinction> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Kraus, S., Kenney, R., Mayo, C., McLennan, W., Moore, M., Nowacek, D. (2016, July 25). Recent Scientific Publications Cast Doubt on North Atlantic Right Whale Future. Retrieved from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2016.00137/full> and Moore, M.J. (2019, January 10). How we can all stop killing whales: a proposal to avoid whale entanglement in fishing gear. *ICES Journal of Marine Science*, fsy194. Retrieved from: <https://academic.oup.com/icesjms/advance-article/doi/10.1093/icesjms/fsy194/5288134> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. van der Hoop, J., Corkeron, P. and Moore, M. (2016, December 11). Entanglement is a costly life‐history stage in large whales. *Ecology and evolution*, *7*(1), pp.92-106. Retrieved from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ece3.2615>; Corkeron, P., Hamilton, P., Bannister, J., Best, P., Charlton, C., Groch, K.R., Findlay, K., Rowntree, V., Vermeulen, E. and Pace III, R.M., 2018. The recovery of North Atlantic right whales, Eubalaena glacialis, has been constrained by human-caused mortality. *Royal Society open science*, *5*(11), p.180892. Retrieved from: <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rsos.180892> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. In the U.S., these successes include the 2008 Final Rule to Implement Speed Restrictions to Reduce the Threat of Ship Collisions with North Atlantic Right Whales, the Seasonal Management Area and Dynamic Management Area regimes established by this rule, speed monitoring and mapping capacities, and improved alert systems. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)