

Update on US Rep. Castor's efforts on fracking, manatees, refuges and offshore oil drilling

July 8, 2016

Good Afternoon Friends:

Next week, the House of Representatives is scheduled to consider the Fiscal Year 2017 Interior-Environment Appropriations bill which funds the Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency. The bill in its current form is a terrible one due to its many provisions or “poison pills” inserted by the majority that roll back many key environmental protections. In an unprecedented development, the majority now requires Members of Congress to submit their amendments to funding bills for vetting by the House Rules Committee.

Yesterday, my boss, U.S. Representative Kathy Castor, filed four different amendments that will improve the health, environment and economy of Florida.

If any or all of the amendments are deemed worthy by the majority of the House Rules Committee, I urge you to inform your members throughout the Sunshine State of our efforts so they can contact their Florida Representatives to encourage them to support these amendments.

I will keep you informed about the status of these amendments when the House Rules Committee meets on Monday, July 11 at 5 pm to decide which ones they think should be debated on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. In the meantime, I encourage you to spread the word to your friends and neighbors.

Link to the Rules Committee website- <https://rules.house.gov/bill/114/hr-5538>

Below, please see the descriptions of all four of Congresswoman Castor’s amendments.

Fracking

Out-of-state oil & gas companies want to come into Florida, suck up our resources and bail. They don’t understand or care about Florida’s geology, the porous limestone that’s a very thin layer of rock. As Congresswoman Castor has stated, it makes no sense whatsoever to pump chemicals down into our drinking water supply and break up that limestone rock to try to get out what is probably a minimal amount of gas.

To date, more than 75 local governments in Florida have expressed opposition to fracking.

Congresswoman Castor’s amendment would prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency from issuing a permit to oil and gas companies to inject their toxic wastewater underground in areas where the local government has passed an ordinance prohibiting hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling, acidization, or any related activity.

Manatee Downlisting

The Florida manatee is an iconic species and has been at the forefront of Florida’s conservation efforts for decades. Unfortunately, folks in Washington no longer think that our beloved “sea

cows” deserve to be classified as “endangered,” even though threats to the species and its habitat abound. To make matters worse, some in Florida are using the proposal to downlist the manatee to get rid of manatee protection areas.

Congresswoman Castor’s bipartisan amendment simply prohibits the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from finalizing its proposal to downlist the Florida manatee from endangered to threatened until the Service considers several factors in its decision such as the anticipated loss of artificial warm water sources, changes in the magnitude of harmful algal blooms and frequency of cold weather events.

Deepwater Horizon BP Oil Disaster

After the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history, the Department of Interior instituted critical safety improvements that would also protect the environment. The bill currently contains a provision that would wipe out these reforms. Congresswoman Castor’s amendment simply eliminates this harmful provision and would maintain the Department of Interior’s safety standards.

National Wildlife Refuges

The Refuges are the world’s premier system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve America’s fish, wildlife and plants. Florida has the most Refuges of any state in the country and we are fortunate to have three in Tampa Bay- Egmont Key, Passage Key and Pinellas National Wildlife Refuges.

According to the Friends of Tampa Bay National Wildlife Refuges, the volunteers who work tirelessly to preserve these oases, our Refuges are in dire need of resources. In 2015, the International Association of Chiefs of Police recommended a drastic increase in law enforcement officers at the identified 101 urban refuges.

Congresswoman Castor’s amendment matches the budget request for Law Enforcement of the National Wildlife Refuge System which would add 16 full time law enforcement personnel.