

## **Marine Debris Act Amendments of 2017**

The nation's waterways are littered with debris that threaten critical habitat, pose a danger to wildlife, and impact delicate shorelines. Plastic shopping bags, rubber tires, cigarette butts, fishing gear, and other trash ends up in oceans from human activity at sea, while much of it is swept into coastal waters via rivers and drainage systems. Much of the debris within US waters does not originate from Americans. Ocean currents move discarded trash from foreign countries incredible distances, and that debris becomes the problem of the country it washes up on. It has been estimated that up to 12.7 million metric tons of waste entered the ocean in 2012, and that number is expected to increase by an order of magnitude if waste management infrastructure improvements are not implemented by 2025<sup>1</sup>. Current authorizations for programs responsible for removal of debris have expired, and there are insufficient resources available to address and understand this problem.

The Marine Debris Act Amendments received a zero score from the Congressional Budget Office.

### **Severe Marine Debris Events**

This legislation would provide a funding source for the cleanup and response for severe marine debris events. This would not authorize any additional spending.

### **Reauthorize NOAAs Marine Debris Program**

This legislation would reauthorize NOAAs Office of Response and Restoration's Marine Debris Program through FY2022. Its mission is to conduct research on the source of marine debris and take action to prevent marine debris. They also issue grants for marine debris cleanup. The NOAA Marine Debris Program was authorized by the Marine Debris Act of 2006, and was last amended in 2012.

### **Encourage Action from the Administration**

The Marine Debris Act Amendments expresses that it is the sense of Congress that the Executive Branch and the U.S. Department of State should become more engaged in the understanding, prevention, and response to marine debris internationally. It would encourage that studies be conducted that would determine:

- The primary means by which marine debris enters the oceans
- The manner in which waste management infrastructure can be most effective in preventing debris from reaching the oceans
- The economic benefits of decreasing the amount of marine debris in the oceans
- The long-term economic impacts of marine debris on the national economies of the countries in the treaty.

The language also encourages the Executive Branch to enter into negotiations with the leaders of foreign countries that produce large amounts of trash to learn about and find solutions to the contributions of such countries to marine debris in the world's oceans. It would also encourage the creation of marine debris to be considered in future U.S. trade agreements.

### **Support**

This language is supported by the American Chemistry Council and the International Conservation Caucus Foundation.

1: Jambeck, JR *et al.* (2015) "Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean." *Science* 347(6223):768-771