NCSL Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Infrastructure

POLICY DIRECTIVES AND RESOLUTIONS

2019 NCSL Capitol Forum
Phoenix, Arizona

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WHEREAS, farmers depend on pollinator species such as bees, ants, butterflies, birds and bats to successfully produce approximately one-third of the world's crop production; and

WHEREAS, pollinator dependent foods include many fruit, vegetable, seed, nut and oil crops, supplying important vitamins, minerals, and nutrients to humans; and

WHEREAS, pollinator loss poses a significant threat to United States agriculture and the ability of farmers to feed a growing world population; and

WHEREAS, more than 40 pollinator species have been federally listed as threatened or endangered; and

WHEREAS, scientists have linked the use of neonicotinoids, a class of systemic insecticides, to the decline of pollinators and deterioration of pollinator health; and

WHEREAS, restrictions on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides and other efforts to protect pollinators have been enacted in communities and states across the country; and

WHEREAS, the Saving America’s Pollinators Act of 2019 will provide the urgent and necessary regulatory restrictions and review of certain pesticides for their toxicity to pollinators.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Conference of State Legislators urges the President of the United States and each member of Congress to act to pass and sign into law the Saving America’s Pollinators Act of 2019, and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be immediately transmitted to the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress.
WHEREAS, the proposed federal National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2019-2024 sought to expand oil and gas exploration, production, and drilling in the Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, and Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the economies of coastal states and communities are supported by tourism, the maritime sector, and fisheries; and

WHEREAS, coastal states and communities have been previously impacted by spills such as the BP Deepwater Horizon explosion that killed 11 people, caused a massive oil spill that leaked 3.19 million barrels of oil and gas into the Gulf of Mexico for 87 days, and resulted in $247 million in losses to the commercial fishing industry; and

WHEREAS, the likelihood of a spill or accident occurring only increases if additional areas of the coast are opened to offshore drilling; and

WHEREAS, the likelihood of a spill or accident occurring only increases with the diminishment of regulatory oversight of offshore drilling activities; and

WHEREAS, in March 2019, U.S. District Judge Sharon Gleason in Alaska declared that the Trump Administration’s order to revoke an Obama era ban on oil and gas drilling in certain areas of the Arctic and Atlantic oceans was illegal; and

WHEREAS, on April 25, 2019, the Department of Interior announced plans to open up the Atlantic and Pacific coastline for offshore drilling have been indefinitely sidelined. This was the result of a March ruling that blocked offshore drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic; and
WHEREAS despite the Department of Interior’s decision to shelve its five-year leasing plan, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management confirmed it will continue processing permits for oil and gas exploration in the Atlantic Ocean, allowing companies to search for oil and gas deposits using potentially harmful seismic air gun blasts; and

WHEREAS in May 2019, the Trump Administration announced a set of rollbacks on safety regulations that were put in place following the BP Deepwater Horizon accident, removing a requirement for third-party testing of safety equipment like blow-out preventers, weakening requirements to maintain real-time onshore monitoring stations, and reducing the reporting frequency of equipment failures and operational issues to federal regulators.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the President of the United States and the Secretary of the Department of Interior are urged to immediately halt the processing of permits for oil and gas exploration in all coasts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the President of the United States and the Secretary of the Department of Interior are urged to establish a moratorium on all future leasing to expand oil and gas exploration, production, and drilling in all coasts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the President of the United States and the Secretary of the Department of Interior are respectfully urged to maintain the strict regulatory enforcement of standards and oversight of existing and future offshore drilling activities established following the BP Deepwater Horizon accident; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be immediately transmitted to the President of the United States, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress.
WHEREAS, populations of fish, wildlife, and plant species in the United States are on the decline, in fact, estimates suggest that one in five native species is at risk of extinction; and

WHEREAS, a major threat to fish, wildlife, and plant species in the United States is the loss, degradation, fragmentation, and obstruction of their natural habitats; and

WHEREAS, wildlife are losing the ability to move across landscapes reducing their ability to respond to changes in habitat, food availability, and climate; and

WHEREAS, wildlife-vehicle collisions cost over $8 billion each year and pose a risk to human and wildlife health; and

WHEREAS, wildlife corridors facilitate the movement of wildlife across the landscape; and

WHEREAS, states are recognizing that wildlife corridors and wildlife crossings are important for protecting native species as well as reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions and are taking actions; and

WHEREAS, the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act will help create a system of federally designated wildlife corridors across the United States on federal lands; and

WHEREAS, the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act will also provide funding and incentives for the protection of wildlife corridors by state and tribal agencies and private landowners on non-federal lands; and
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Conference of State Legislators urges the President of the United States and each Member of Congress to establish a national system to implement and promote wildlife corridors and crossings similar to that of the federal Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2019, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be immediately transmitted to the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress.
The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) believes a strong animal production agriculture capacity is imperative in maintaining domestic and international consumer confidence in the safety of the United States meat supply.

Animal Identification
NCSL believes a national animal identification program, if properly implemented in cooperation with the states and territories, could be beneficial in maintaining consumer confidence in meat from the United States, an invaluable tool in reducing and tracking future outbreaks of infectious disease, and serving as an important firewall against any attempted terrorist attack on the food production system in the United States.

Any future effort by USDA to develop a national animal identification program must be designed and implemented in full consultation with state legislatures to ensure proper attention to public interest and financial considerations. Any program must be designed and implemented in cooperation with the departments of agriculture of the states and territories. USDA must work to ensure that any animal identification system is compatible with the current inspection and enforcement systems of the state governments. Any applicable federal program should not be applied to animals involved in intrastate commerce without state consultation.

Equine Industry and USDA Inspection of Horse Meat
The processing of horses has become a controversial and emotional issue, resulting in the closure of the last horse processing facility in the United States. Without affordable and economic alternatives, unwanted horses are abandoned. The nation’s inadequate and overburdened horse rescue and adoption facilities cannot begin to handle the influx. These additional unwanted horses will compete for adoption with wild horses that
are currently fed and sheltered at a public expense. In the Western United States (US), the additional pressure on public lands from horses turned out to run wild is only intensifying the over-population, over-grazing, and ultimate destruction of the ecosystem.

**NCSL urges members of Congress to:**

- Recognize the need for humane horse processing facilities in the United States.
- Not to interfere with State efforts to establish facilities in the United States. State livestock programs that were once able to recoup the costs of caring and feeding for abandoned animals by marketing them, are now forced to greatly increase their budgets at the expense of taxpayers.
- Recognize the positive economic impact of willing market for the US horse industry. These, and ethnic markets inside the US would appreciate an additional source of high quality protein untainted by disease concerns of other species of livestock.
- Oppose legislation that would restrict the market, transport, processing, or export of horses. Horse processing in the United States is particularly tightly regulated, and the horse is the only animal whose transportation to processing is regulated. Horse processing facilities in the United States are required to have United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) veterinarians supervise the euthanasia, and the euthanasia method is humane, according the American Veterinary Medical Association and the United States Department of Agriculture.
- Oppose limitations under federal appropriations law prohibiting the use of federal dollars to be spent on the salaries of inspectors for ante- and post-mortem inspections.

With respect to the Wild Horse and Burro program created by The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, NCSL recognizes and appreciates that several stakeholder groups who each have avid, although diverging, interests in the program, have come together on a non-lethal compromise proposal based on the following four aspects: strategic gatherings in the most densely populated herd management areas; relocating animals currently in holding facilities and those being removed from the range...
to larger, more cost-effective pasture facilities; significantly scaled-up implementation of proven, safe and humane population growth suppression strategies to help reduce and manage population growth; and increased adoptions. NCSL believes these concepts, once more fully developed by program specialists at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), have merit. NCSL therefore supports a funding increase for the BLM to work with interested stakeholders to further develop a science-based approach that utilizes non-lethal methods to properly manage wild horses and burros. NCSL recommends Congress fully fund and implement the plan on all herd management areas.

NCSL further recommends that all removals follow the guidelines outlined in the BLM’s Comprehensive Animal Welfare Policy (CAWP); all private parties providing care for wild horses and burros shall provide proof of their ability to offer humane conditions and protection against abuse, neglect, or slaughter; private parties shall ensure that wild horses and burros will not be returned to the range; and the BLM present to the appropriate Congressional Committees with a detailed briefing prior to obligation and expenditure of any program increase, and quarterly once the program is implemented.

**Interstate Sale of State-Inspected Meat and Poultry**

NCSL encourages USDA to continue the Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program in qualifying states as the program levels the economic playing field for small businesses, spurs more competition in the marketplace, creates a more uniform inspection system, and enhances consumer confidence in the food supply – all of which benefit farmers, ranchers, processors, small business and consumers.