

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2016

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee

US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee

US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As leaders of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, we are writing in support of continuing a general provision for Fiscal Year 2017 in the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill that would protect traditional fishing tackle from unnecessary and economically harmful regulation by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Section 420 in the Interior division of the Fiscal Year 2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act and Section 424 in Fiscal Year 2015 provided much needed protection for the recreational fishing industry and anglers by ensuring that popular fishing tackle made from lead cannot be regulated under the Toxic Substances Control Act.

Recreational fishing is an important part of American heritage and positively contributes to our constituents' quality of life. The US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Census Bureau estimate that 46 million Americans fish in a given year. Recreational fishing has a \$115 billion impact on the nation's economy and supports 828,000 jobs. Unfortunately, this popular outdoor activity that supports many communities throughout the country has been threatened in recent years by overregulation and attempts to ban traditional fishing equipment containing lead.

Over the past decade, the EPA has been petitioned three times by environmental organizations to ban lead fishing tackle. These petitions are based on the supposition that lead fishing tackle is

harmful to populations of wildlife, which has been demonstrated time and again to be untrue. No population-level impacts attributable to lead fishing tackle on any wildlife species have ever been documented.

While the EPA has consistently dismissed these petitions, the potential for future petitions and possible bans creates uncertainty for anglers and fishing tackle businesses when popular fishing equipment containing lead are under constant and unfounded threats of being banned. For many categories of fishing equipment, such as sinkers and jigs, lead is a very common material. Forcing anglers and businesses to switch to alternatives, which are more expensive and/or less effective, would have a significant and negative economic impact. State fish and wildlife agencies are in the best position and have the necessary authority to determine if lead tackle restrictions are warranted for local populations should they discover a need.

The 2016 National Defense Authorization Act provided a permanent exemption for lead ammunition, but fishing tackle is still vulnerable to future bans. Our Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act and the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee reported version of the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act of 2016 provide permanent relief for fishing tackle from EPA regulation. It is our intention that the SHARE Act be enacted into law, but the prospect of passing legislation with these provisions in the Senate remains unclear. It would be prudent and the best course of action to ensure that the protections in the SHARE and Sportsmen's Act are backstopped by including safeguards in the FY 2017 Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill.

Therefore, we request the following provision be included in the Fiscal Year 2017 bill:


SEC. __ None of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to regulate fishing tackle under the Toxic Substances Control Act (15 U.S.C. 2601 6 et seq.) or any other law.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Representative Robert J. Wittman
Co-Chair Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus



Representative Jeff Duncan
Vice-Chair Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus



Representative Gene Green
Vice-Chair Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus