THE INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION CAUCUS

SECTION 1. PURPOSE.

To establish an International Conservation Caucus within the U.S. House of Representatives.

SECTION 2. MISSION.

The members of the International Conservation Caucus share a conviction that the United States has the opportunity and the obligation to advance the protection of the worldwide environment for current and future generations. The mission of the Caucus is to act on this conviction by providing the strong U.S. leadership necessary to conserve the world's most biologically rich and diverse places.

SECTION 3. FINDINGS.

(A) Conservation is an American value, imprinted on the national character by Teddy Roosevelt and others, and attested to by the tens of millions of Americans who fish, hunt, hike, or otherwise enjoy the outdoors.

(B) The United States has a long and proud history of conserving its natural heritage. This includes the creation of Yellowstone National Park, founded in 1872, and the world's first national park system.

(C) Supporting the conservation efforts of developing countries is in keeping with America's role as a global leader and benefits U.S. citizens by fostering a more stable, prosperous, healthy, peaceful, and inspirational world.

(D) Significant international goodwill can be generated for the U.S. by providing technical expertise, policy innovations, financial resources, information technology, and general leadership and encouragement to conservation programs in other countries.

(E) There are a shrinking number of nations in which significant tracts of wilderness remain intact. Further, many of the world's most biologically diverse areas are under severe threat from unsustainable (and often illegal) resource extraction, population growth, destructive agricultural practices, and other causes.

(F) The value inherent in wilderness and biologically diverse areas is immeasurable. Among other things, they provide globally important ecological services, offer indigenous peoples the chance to maintain their traditional cultures, and shelter some of the world's rarest and most spectacular wildlife.

(G) The following principles should guide U.S. efforts to support international conservation programs:

i. All actions must be grounded in respect for the sovereignty, cultures and traditions of the nations in which programs are implemented.
ii. Careful account must be given to local community concerns and needs.
iii. Sound science is fundamental to designing effective conservation strategies.
iv. Protected areas are a cornerstone of successful and sustainable conservation.
v. Conservation should be linked with efforts to promote good governance, strengthen rule of law, reduce poverty, encourage economic development, nurture democratic institutions, advance education, and improve public health.
vi. Conservation requires collaboration among governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, international institutions, and others.

SECTION 4. FUNCTIONS.

Members of the International Conservation Caucus shall:

(A) Educate fellow Members, constituents, the media, and others about the importance of, and benefits associated with, strong U.S. leadership in promoting and supporting conservation around the world.

(B) Lead efforts to increase the scale and effectiveness of U.S. Government support for international conservation programs. This includes exploring and pursuing opportunities to adopt new policies and create new incentives and funding vehicles, where appropriate.

(C) Heighten the profile of conservation issues in dialogues with representatives of other governments.