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NEWS

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For Immediate Release
November 12, 2014

House Passes Posey-Murphy Bipartisan Plan to Help Estuaries with Critical Needs

WASHINGTON, DC – Today the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation (H.R. 5266) to reauthorize funding for the National Estuary Program (NEP). Reps. Bill Posey and Patrick Murphy, two of four principle co-authors of H.R. 5266, were able to secure the inclusion of their bipartisan plan (H.R. 5117) to reprioritize existing funding so more money is available for estuaries with critical needs like our Indian River Lagoon. In July, Posey and Murphy introduced the *Estuary Urgent Needs Priority Program Act* to meet high priority needs across the nation's 28 national estuaries.

“This common sense plan will help provide critical funding for our nation's estuaries, and make available additional funding to estuaries that are experiencing urgent and challenging ecological problems, including our own Indian River Lagoon,” **said Rep. Posey**. “I'm pleased to see this important legislation move forward in a strongly bipartisan manner.”

“It is great to see the House act swiftly on the National Estuary Program to help support the health of our waterways. The Treasure Coast will directly benefit because this bill includes our bipartisan proposal to prioritize the Indian River Lagoon,” **said Rep. Murphy**. “With the health of our economy directly tied to our waterways, this common-sense measure is well-deserving of the overwhelming bipartisan support it received today, and I hope that the Senate quickly follows suit.”

In addition to providing strong funding for base NEP grants, the Posey-Murphy plan directs the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to prioritize funding to provide additional awards for estuaries that are experiencing urgent and challenging ecological problems. Some problems include: sea grass loss, reoccurring harmful algal blooms and invasive exotic species or jellyfish proliferation. These awards would be provided on a competitive basis and would be funded through funds already authorized for the NEP program. The base bill also secures higher levels of funding for each estuary's base grant.

Under H.R. 5266, the National Estuary Program is reauthorized for Fiscal Year 2015 at \$27 million. The Posey-Murphy plan makes 15% of appropriated funds available for the additional competitive awards to estuaries with urgent needs. The bill also gives direction to the EPA to ensure that no less than 80% of the funding is reserved for estuary base grants.

The National Estuary Program, which enjoys broad bipartisan support, was created in the 1987 Clean Water Act Amendments. It is run through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to protect and restore water quality and ensure ecological health of estuaries of national significance. There are 28 “estuaries of national significance” that span multiple states and congressional districts all over the country. Each estuary uses local input and local priorities to create a management plan that addresses the issues of water quality and ecological health.

[Click Here](#) to watch Rep. Posey's Floor Speech.