**Wildlife Conservation and Anti-Trafficking Act of 2018**

**Summary**

Wildlife-trafficking and conservation violations jeopardize threatened species, contribute to human-rights violations and facilitate the operation of international criminal organizations. These risks are exacerbated by insufficient penalties for offenders and the difficulty of maintaining US-oversight on the global level.

The bill proposes to address these concerns by criminalizing elements of wildlife-trafficking operations under federal racketeering and organized crime statutes. Classifying wildlife-trafficking crimes as “predicate offenses” under the Money Laundering Statute, Travel Act and RICO Act enables prosecutors to administer substantial fines and prison-time for violations.

The bill recognizes the value of whistleblowers’ information to direct investigations into wildlife-trafficking violations. It establishes a procedure to secure valuable, useful information from informants and provide compensation. The bill redirects penalty payments from wildlife-trafficking violations to fund whistleblower compensation programs. Monetary rewards to wildlife-crime whistleblowers come from partial share of penalty paid to the U.S. government, providing no additional expense to American taxpayers.

The bill empowers federal wildlife agents to operate abroad and provides them with direction to collaborate with local authorities. It instructs the Secretary of Interior to adopt an International Wildlife Conservation Program consisting of four components:

1. A regional component providing for protection of natural range habitats.
2. A species component focusing conservation on most-vulnerable species.
3. An anti-trafficking component to curtail demand and limit poaching.
4. A convention component to implement the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

The legislation seeks to expand the Marine Turtle Act of 2004 by extending the legislation’s coverage to include US-territories, and increasing the Act’s scope to cover marine and freshwater turtles as well as tortoises.

Additionally, the bill proposes to strengthen the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, and the Shark-Finning Measure under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, establishing that fines associated with violating these Acts are to be used to benefit the same species that were affected.

The bill addresses illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by considering serious abuses of Section 307 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act as violations of the Money Laundering Act, and therefore subjecting violators to substantial penalties.