

**Floor Statement**  
**FY 2020 CJS Appropriations Bill: Lobster Research**  
**U.S. Senator Susan Collins**  
**October 29, 2019**

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For the next few moments, I would like to talk about another bill that had unanimous support on the Committee, and that is the CJS Appropriations bill. Let me begin by acknowledging the hard work of the Chairman, Senator Moran, and the Ranking Member, Senator Shaheen, for their work in balancing the many priorities that are included in this bill. Once again, we saw the Chairman and the Ranking Member working together as a team in a bipartisan—and indeed a nonpartisan—way in order to find common ground.

I'd like to comment on a few of the provisions of the bill that I think are particularly important.

First, I'm encouraged that the bill continues to provide strong support for the National Sea Grant College Program despite the Administration's desire to eliminate this program. The Committee actually provided an increase of \$7 million over last year's funding level. The University of Maine Sea Grant Program is a national leader in ocean research—an issue that I know is very important to the presiding officer from Florida as well. Within the Sea Grant program, there is \$2 million for critical lobster research, building on the \$2 million that was included last year.

The Sea Grant Program recently announced seven research awards supported by this funding, four of which were awarded to Maine entities in recognition of their extraordinary expertise and research. These investments will help us to better understand how the lobster stock is reacting to changing environmental conditions and ensure that this iconic industry, indeed one of the very symbols of the State of Maine, continues to thrive. The problem is that we're seeing an increase of warming in the Gulf of Maine. In fact, it is warming the second-fastest of any body of water in the world, and that has brought new kinds of sea life—for example, an invasive green crab that never existed in Maine waters—so we're watching the impact very carefully and particularly on our lobster industry.

I am also glad that the bill prioritizes the development of technologies to better track the right whale population. Now, the number of right whales is problematic. While it is not as low as it was a few years ago, it is still troublesome that the population continues to be under stress. NOAA has targeted the Maine lobster industry with potentially very onerous right whale regulations, despite the government's inability to adequately monitor the movement of these right whales. Mr. President, we must better understand where the right whales are and where they are not. And this too is important in terms of our warming waters. The major food supply for the right whales has moved to the north towards Canada, and that's why the entanglements that we've seen, which we all deplore, have involved Canadian gear, and I think that is very important to recognize. There have also been some Canadian ship strikes.

Mr. President, our lobstermen and women have been such careful stewards of the resource, and that has been true for generations. Lobstering is often a family business passed on from

generation to generation. The lobstermen and women of Maine care deeply about our lobster stocks and about ensuring that lobsters are there for generations to come. And, they have been extraordinary conservationists. They invented the v-notching of lobsters—the sizing to make sure that lobsters that are big and breeders are tossed overboard or those that are too small are returned to the water. Unfortunately, our Canadian counterparts often do not follow those same cooperative conservation measures. And, there is an area off of the coast of Maine that is known as the Gray Zone, where it is in dispute whose waters, whether it is the United States or Canada, the Gray Zone is. And what we find is American and Canadian lobstermen both in that area or close by and our lobstermen and women following strict conservation methods such as throwing back the lobsters that are too small or the big breeder lobsters only to see their Canadian counterparts keep those lobsters. And, in some cases, they are undoubtedly the very lobsters that have been thrown back into the sea by our lobstermen and women. So those conflicting conservation measures between American and Canadian fisheries have caused Mainers to grow increasingly concerned that their Canadian counterparts are threatening the sustainability of critical fishing stocks, as well as that fragile right whale population.

The bill that has been reported by the Appropriations Committee encourages NOAA to work cooperatively with state and national and Canadian fishery officials on these important issues.

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