

110<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
2<sup>D</sup> SESSION

# H. CON. RES. 300

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 22, 2008

Received and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation

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## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Recognizing the necessity for the United States to maintain its significant leadership role in improving the health and promoting the resiliency of coral reef ecosystems, and for other purposes.

Whereas coral reef ecosystems are among the world's most biologically diverse and productive marine habitats, and are often described as the tropical rain forest of the oceans;

Whereas healthy coral reef ecosystems provide the basis for subsistence, commercial fisheries, and coastal and marine tourism and are of vital economic importance to coastal States and territories of the United States including Florida, Hawaii, Georgia, Texas, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;

Whereas healthy coral reef ecosystems function as natural, regenerating coastal barriers, protecting shorelines and

coastal areas from high waves, storm surges, and accompanying losses of human life and property;

Whereas the coral reef research community has long established that coral reefs are subject to a wide range of natural and anthropogenic threats, including climate change;

Whereas the health of coral reef ecosystems is at serious risk due to a variety of human activities, both local and global;

Whereas protecting and conserving coral reef ecosystems is an urgent issue, but they may be preserved if we act now;

Whereas changing climate is potentially one of the most significant long-term influences on the structure and function of coral reef ecosystems, including the devastating effects of ocean acidification and rising ocean temperatures;

Whereas a wide variety of destructive fishing practices, including the use of cyanide, other poisons, surfactants, and explosives, are contributing to the global decline of coral reef ecosystems;

Whereas the United States has taken measures to protect national coral reef resources through the designation and management of several marine protected areas located in both the Pacific and Caribbean, through building local management capacity, and by supporting effective management and sound research to preserve, sustain, and restore valuable coral reef ecosystems;

Whereas our Nation's coral reef ecosystems provide benefit and opportunity to all, and conservation of these important resources requires the coordinated efforts of the many Federal agencies and State, territory, and commonwealth partners that comprise the U.S. Coral Reef Task

Force and our many nongovernmental, international, and academic partners;

Whereas the United States, acting through its agencies, has established itself as a global leader in coral reef ecosystem stewardship by launching and remaining an active and engaged participant in the International Coral Reef Initiative, and by maintaining professional networks for the purposes of sharing knowledge and information on coral reef ecosystems, furnishing near real-time data collected at coral reef sites, providing a repository for historical data relating to coral reefs, and making substantial contributions to the general body of coral reef knowledge; and

Whereas 2008 has been declared the “International Year of the Reef” by the coral reef research community and over 40 national and international coral reef research, conservation, and academic organizations: Now, therefore, be it

1        *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*  
 2 *concurring)*, That the Congress recognizes the necessity  
 3 for the United States to maintain its significant leadership  
 4 role in improving the health and promoting the resiliency  
 5 of coral reef ecosystems, by—

6            (1) strengthening awareness about ecological,  
 7            economic, social, and cultural values of coral reefs  
 8            and associated ecosystems;

9            (2) improving understanding of the critical  
 10            threats to coral reefs and generating both practical  
 11            and innovative solutions to reduce those threats; and

