

Suspend the Rules and Pass the Bill, H.R. 6893, With an Amendment

(The amendment strikes all after the enacting clause and inserts a new text)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 6893

To reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay Office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 18, 2025

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia (for himself, Mr. WITTMAN, Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia, and Ms. ELFRETH) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay Office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Chesapeake Bay Wa-
5 tershed Advancement for Training, Education, Restora-
6 tion, and Science (WATERS) Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF NATIONAL OCEANIC AND**
2 **ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION CHESA-**
3 **PEAKE BAY OFFICE.**

4 Section 307 of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
5 Administration Authorization Act of 1992 (15 U.S.C.
6 1511d) is amended—

7 (1) in subsection (a)—

8 (A) in paragraph (1), by striking “(in this
9 section” and all that follows and inserting a pe-
10 riod;

11 (B) in paragraph (2), to read as follows:

12 “(2) The Office shall be headed by a Director, who—

13 “(A) shall have knowledge and experience in re-
14 search or resource management efforts in the Chesa-
15 peake Bay; and

16 “(B) shall be responsible for the administration
17 and operation of the Office and the implementation
18 of this section.”; and

19 (C) by striking paragraph (3);

20 (2) in subsection (b)—

21 (A) in paragraph (2), by striking “Sec-
22 retary of Commerce” and inserting “Adminis-
23 trator”;

24 (B) in paragraph (3)—

25 (i) by inserting “with and represent”
26 after “coordinate”;

(ii) by striking “, the Chesapeake Bay Regional Sea Grant Programs, and the Chesapeake Bay units of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System,” and inserting “for the Chesapeake Bay Program and that relate to the Chesapeake Bay watershed in furtherance of such Administration’s coastal resource stewardship mission,”;

(iii) in subparagraph (A)—

(I) in clauses (vi) and (vii), by striking “and” at the end; and

(II) by adding at the end the following:

“(viii) coastal hazards; and

“(ix) education; and”; and

(iv) in subparagraph (B)—

(I) in clause (iii), by striking “and” at the end;

(II) in clause (iv), by inserting “and” after the semicolon; and

(III) by adding at the end the following:

“(v) integrated ecosystem assessments;”;

1 (C) in paragraph (4)—

2 (i) by striking “Environmental Pro-
3 tection Agency” and inserting “Chesapeake
4 Executive Council”; and

5 (ii) by inserting before the semicolon
6 at the end the following: “as appropriate to
7 further the purposes of this section”;

8 (D) by striking paragraphs (5) and (7);

9 (E) by redesignating paragraph (6) as
10 paragraph (5); and

11 (F) by adding at the end the following:

12 “(6) perform any functions necessary to sup-
13 port the programs referred to in paragraph (3).”;

14 (3) by striking subsections (c), (d), and (e); and

15 (4) by adding at the end the following:

16 “(c) PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.—

17 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator, acting
18 through the Director, shall implement the program
19 activities authorized by this section to support the
20 activity of the Chesapeake Executive Council and to
21 further the purposes of this section.

22 “(2) ENSURING SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
23 MERIT.—The Director shall—

24 “(A) establish and use an effective and
25 transparent mechanism to ensure that projects

1 funded under this section have undergone ap-
2 propriate peer review; and

3 “(B) provide other appropriate means to
4 determine that such projects have acceptable
5 scientific and technical merit for the purpose of
6 achieving maximum use of available funds and
7 resources to benefit the Chesapeake Bay area.

8 “(3) CONSULTATION WITH CHESAPEAKE EXEC-
9 UTIVE COUNCIL.—The Director shall, in the imple-
10 mentation of the program activities authorized under
11 this section, consult with the Chesapeake Executive
12 Council, to ensure that the activities of the Office
13 are consistent with the purposes and priorities of the
14 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and plans developed
15 pursuant to the such agreement.

16 “(4) INTEGRATED COASTAL OBSERVATIONS.—

17 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator,
18 acting through the Director, may collaborate
19 with scientific and academic institutions, State
20 and Federal agencies, nongovernmental organi-
21 zations, and other constituents in the Chesa-
22 peake Bay watershed to support an integrated
23 observations system for the Chesapeake Bay
24 consistent with the purposes of the Integrated

1 Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of
2 2009 (33 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.).

3 “(B) SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS.—To sup-
4 port the system referred to in subparagraph (A)
5 and provide a complete set of environmental in-
6 formation for the Chesapeake Bay, the Director
7 shall—

8 “(i) coordinate monitoring with Fed-
9 eral and State agencies in the tidal por-
10 tions of the Chesapeake Bay to understand
11 impacts of water quality on living marine
12 resources;

13 “(ii) identify new data collection needs
14 and deploy new technologies, as appro-
15 priate;

16 “(iii) collect and analyze the scientific
17 information necessary for the management
18 of living marine resources and the marine
19 habitat associated with such resources; and

20 “(iv) organize the information de-
21 scribed in clause (iii) into products that
22 are useful to policy makers, resource man-
23 agers, scientists, and the public.

24 “(C) CHESAPEAKE BAY INTERPRETIVE
25 BUOY SYSTEM.—To further the development

1 and implementation of the Chesapeake Bay In-
2 terpretive Buoy System and associated moni-
3 toring assets to improve weather and ecological
4 forecasts, monitor habitat conditions for living
5 marine resources, the Director may—

6 “(i) support the establishment and
7 implementation of the Captain John Smith
8 Chesapeake National Historic Trail;

9 “(ii) delineate key waypoints along the
10 trail and provide appropriate real-time
11 data and information for trail users;

12 “(iii) interpret data and information
13 for use by educators and students to in-
14 spire stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay;
15 and

16 “(iv) incorporate the observational
17 data from the Chesapeake Bay Interpretive
18 Buoy System into the Integrated Ocean
19 Observing System regional observing sys-
20 tem network.

21 “(5) CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED EDU-
22 CATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM.—

23 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator,
24 acting through the Director, may establish a

1 Chesapeake Bay watershed education and train-
2 ing program. The program shall—

3 “(i) continue and expand the Ches-
4 peake Bay watershed education programs
5 offered by the Office immediately before
6 the enactment of the Chesapeake Bay Wa-
7 tershed Advancement for Training, Edu-
8 cation, Restoration, and Science
9 (WATERS) Act;

10 “(ii) improve the understanding of el-
11 ementary and secondary school students
12 and teachers of the living resources of the
13 ecosystem of the Chesapeake Bay;

14 “(iii) provide education and career
15 pathway internships; and

16 “(iv) meet the educational goals of the
17 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

18 “(B) GRANT PROGRAM.—The Director
19 may award grants for the purposes of this para-
20 graph. Grants awarded under this subpara-
21 graph may be used to support education and
22 training projects that enhance understanding
23 and assessment of a specific environmental
24 problem in the Chesapeake Bay watershed or a
25 goal of the Chesapeake Bay Program, or pro-

1 tect or restore living resources of the Chesa-
2 peake Bay watershed, including projects that—

3 “(i) provide classroom education, in-
4 cluding the development and use of dis-
5 tance learning and other innovative tech-
6 nologies, related to the Chesapeake Bay
7 watershed;

8 “(ii) provide meaningful watershed
9 educational experiences in the Chesapeake
10 Bay watershed;

11 “(iii) provide professional development
12 for teachers related to the Chesapeake Bay
13 watershed and the dissemination of perti-
14 nent education materials oriented to vary-
15 ing grade levels;

16 “(iv) demonstrate or disseminate envi-
17 ronmental educational tools and materials
18 related to the Chesapeake Bay watershed;

19 “(v) demonstrate field methods, prac-
20 tices, and techniques including assessment
21 of environmental and ecological conditions
22 and analysis of environmental problems;
23 and

1 “(vi) build the capacity of school dis-
2 tricts and their partners to deliver high
3 quality environmental education programs.

4 “(C) COORDINATION.—The Director shall
5 implement the education and training program
6 in coordination with the heads of other Federal
7 agencies, as the Director determines appro-
8 priate.

9 “(6) COASTAL AND LIVING RESOURCES MAN-
10 AGEMENT AND HABITAT PROGRAM.—

11 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator,
12 acting through the Director, may establish a
13 Chesapeake Bay Coastal Living Resources Man-
14 agement and Habitat Program to support co-
15 ordinated management, protection, character-
16 ization, and restoration of priority Chesapeake
17 Bay habitats and living resources, including
18 oysters, blue crabs, salt marshes, submerged
19 aquatic vegetation, and economically and eco-
20 logically important fish species such as striped
21 bass and menhaden.

22 “(B) ACTIVITIES.—Under the Chesapeake
23 Bay Coastal Living Resources Management and
24 Habitat Program, the Director may carry out
25 or enter into grants, contracts, and cooperative

1 agreements and provide technical assistance to
2 support—

3 “(i) native oyster research and res-
4 toration;

5 “(ii) fish and shellfish aquaculture
6 that is carried out in accordance with a
7 valid Federal or State permit;

8 “(iii) establishment of submerged
9 aquatic vegetation restoration programs;

10 “(iv) the development of programs
11 that restore, protect, and build the resil-
12 ience of critical coastal habitats and com-
13 munities;

14 “(v) habitat mapping, characteriza-
15 tion, and assessment techniques necessary
16 to identify, assess, and monitor Ches-
17 peake Bay conditions and restoration ac-
18 tions;

19 “(vi) application and transfer of ap-
20 plied scientific research and ecosystem
21 management tools to fisheries and habitat
22 managers;

23 “(vii) collection, synthesis, and shar-
24 ing of information to inform and influence

1 coastal and living resource management
2 issues;

3 “(viii) ecologically and economically
4 important fish and shellfish research; and

5 “(ix) other activities that the director
6 determines are appropriate to carry out
7 the purposes of such program.

8 “(d) DELEGATION.—

9 “(1) AUTHORITY.—The Administrator shall del-
10 egate to the Director such authority as may be nec-
11 essary to carry out this section.

12 “(2) STAFF.—The Administrator shall assign
13 to the Director appropriate staff representing exper-
14 tise that covers the breadth of the duties of the Of-
15 fice.

16 “(e) REPORTS.—

17 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator, acting
18 through the Director, shall submit a biennial report
19 to the Committee on Natural Resources of the
20 House of Representatives, the Committee on Com-
21 merce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate,
22 and the Secretary of Commerce on the activities of
23 the Office and on progress made in protecting and
24 restoring the living resources and habitat of the
25 Chesapeake Bay.

1 “(2) ACTION PLAN.—Each such report shall in-
2 clude an action plan for the 2-year period following
3 submission of the report, consisting of—

4 “(A) a list of recommended research, moni-
5 toring, and data collection activities necessary
6 to continue implementation of the strategy
7 under subsection (b)(2); and

8 “(B) recommendations to integrate Na-
9 tional Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
10 activities with the activities of the partners in
11 the Chesapeake Bay Program to meet the com-
12 mitments of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement
13 and subsequent agreements.

14 “(f) AGREEMENTS.—The Administrator, acting
15 through the Director, may enter into and perform such
16 contracts, leases, grants, or cooperative agreements as
17 may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.

18 “(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

19 “(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term ‘Adminis-
20 trator’ means the Administrator of the National
21 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

22 “(2) CHESAPEAKE BAY AGREEMENT; CHESA-
23 PEAKE BAY ECOSYSTEM; CHESAPEAKE BAY PRO-
24 GRAM; CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.—The
25 terms ‘Chesapeake Bay Agreement’, ‘Chesapeake

1 Bay ecosystem’, ‘Chesapeake Bay Program’, and
2 ‘Chesapeake Executive Council’ have the meanings
3 given those terms in section 117(a) of the Federal
4 Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1267(a)).

5 “(3) DIRECTOR.—The term ‘Director’ means
6 the Director of the Office.

7 “(4) OFFICE.—The term ‘Office’ means the
8 Chesapeake Bay Office established under this sec-
9 tion.”.