

## House Resolution 651

By: Representatives Knight of the 134<sup>th</sup>, Rhodes of the 124<sup>th</sup>, Meeks of the 178<sup>th</sup>, Stephens of the 164<sup>th</sup>, Sainz of the 180<sup>th</sup>, and others

## A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Georgia Congressional Delegation to assist in finding reasonable solutions to  
2 protect North Atlantic right whales and Georgia's coastal culture and economy; and for other  
3 purposes.

4 WHEREAS, Georgia coastal waters serve as an important seasonal habitat for the North  
5 Atlantic right whale, a species highly valued by the people of Georgia as an important part  
6 of our marine ecosystem; and

7 WHEREAS, the Georgia General Assembly recognizes the North Atlantic right whale as a  
8 critically endangered species and supports mitigation measures to prevent human-related  
9 mortality; and

10 WHEREAS, the National Marine Fisheries Service is proposing changes to the North  
11 Atlantic right whale vessel strike reduction rule that will impose a 10 knot maximum speed  
12 limit for nearly half of the year out to 40 nautical miles for vessels 35 feet and longer; and

13 WHEREAS, there are significant concerns that the changes to the rule currently being  
14 considered by the National Marine Fisheries Service are not based on the best available  
15 science; are unenforceable; risk human safety; will not meaningfully protect right whales;

16 and will have significant negative impacts on Georgia's anglers, boaters, the fishing and  
17 boating industry, the maritime shipping industry, and coastal economies if implemented; and

18 WHEREAS, with recent advancements in aerial surveillance, passive acoustic monitoring,  
19 satellite tagging, sonar, and DNA detection technologies combined with the relatively few  
20 individual right whales off our coast, mitigation would be more successful and less  
21 economically harmful by using real-time information to alert boaters of right whale presence  
22 and implementing slow speed requirements when and where whales are present; and

23 WHEREAS, Congress has already set in motion the ability for the National Marine Fisheries  
24 Service to implement real conservation measures through Section 11303 of the National  
25 Defense Authorization Act of 2023, which authorized a pilot program to design and deploy  
26 a near real-time monitoring and mitigation program for threatened or endangered whales.

27 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that  
28 the members of this body urge the Georgia Congressional Delegation to assist coastal  
29 communities by appropriating funds to the National Marine Fisheries Service for the  
30 implementation of a real-time monitoring program with the capacity to alert anglers,  
31 recreational boaters, and mariners to known locations of North Atlantic right whales.

32 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized  
33 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the  
34 Georgia Congressional Delegation, Governor's Office, and the Georgia Department of  
35 Natural Resources.