

DOC HASTINGS, WA  
CHAIRMAN  
DON YOUNG, AK  
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TN  
LOUIE GOHMERT, TX  
ROB BISHOP, UT  
DOUG LAMBORN, CO  
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VA  
PAUL C. BROUN, GA  
JOHN FLEMING, LA  
MIKE COFFMAN, CO  
TOM McCLINTOCK, CA  
GLENN THOMPSON, PA  
JEFF DENHAM, CA  
DAN BENISHEK, MI  
DAVID RIVERA, FL  
JEFF DUNCAN, SC  
SCOTT R. TIPTON, CO  
PAUL A. GOSAR, AZ  
RAÚL R. LABRADOR, ID  
KRISTI L. NOEM, SD  
STEVE SOUTHERLAND II, FL  
BILL FLORES, TX  
ANDY HARRIS, MD  
JEFFREY M. LANDRY, LA  
JON RUNYAN, NJ  
BILL JOHNSON, OH  
MARK AMODEI, NV

TODD YOUNG  
CHIEF OF STAFF

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable John Fleming**  
**Chairman**

**Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs**

**At the Legislative Hearing on**

**H.R. 511: To Prohibit the Importation of Various Species of Constrictor Snakes**  
**Thursday, November 29, 2012**

EDWARD J. MARKEY, MA  
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER  
DALE E. KILDEE, MI  
PETER A. DeFAZIO, OR  
ENI F.H. FALOMAVAEGA, AS  
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NJ  
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CA  
RUSH D. HOLT, NJ  
RAUL M. GRIJALVA, AZ  
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, GU  
JIM COSTA, CA  
DAN BOREN, OK  
GREGORIO KILILICAMACHOSABLAN, CNMI  
MARTIN HEINRICH, NM  
BEN RAY LUJÁN, NM  
JOHN P. SARBANES, MD  
BETTY SUTTON, OH  
NIKI TSONGAS, MA  
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, PR  
JOHN GARAMENDI, CA  
COLLEEN W. HANABUSA, HI  
PAUL TONKO, NY

JEFFREY DUNCAN  
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

Good morning, today, we will hear testimony on H.R. 511, a bill introduced by the distinguished gentleman from Florida, Congressman Tom Rooney to list nine species of constrictor snakes under the Lacey Act.

Let me say at the outset that I compliment my colleagues from the Florida delegation for their tireless commitment to restoring the Florida Everglades. But I have concerns that H.R. 511 will end up destroying hundreds of small businesses without providing any real benefit to the Everglades.

By way of background, there are several key dates in this discussion. The first was on June 23, 2006, when the South Florida Water Management District petitioned the Fish and Wildlife Service to list Burmese pythons on the Lacey Act. The next important date was on January 20, 2010, when the Secretary of the Interior proposed to administratively list nine species of constrictor snakes.

Before announcing a decision, however, the State of Florida implemented a law as of July 1, 2010, prohibiting the importation and personal possession of seven species of snakes including Burmese pythons.

Finally, after an exhaustive analysis by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the U. S. Small Business Administration of more than 56,000 comments, the Secretary of the Interior announced on January 17<sup>th</sup> of this year that four of the nine species – including the two species that have established populations in the Everglades – would be treated as ‘injurious wildlife.’ It is now a violation of federal law to import and to move these four species in interstate commerce. Upon making the decision, Secretary Salazar noted that it was intended to “strike a balance” between economic and environmental concerns.

We are now being asked in H.R. 511 to go far beyond the recommendations of the South Florida Water Management District, the State of Florida and the Fish and Wildlife Service by listing all nine species of constrictor snakes.

It is important to remember that millions of Americans own and have legally acquired constrictor snakes. They weren't smuggled into this country. While some of these Americans are simply content to have a Boa constrictor as a pet, many others have created small businesses which breed them, feed them, provide equipment for them, sell them at pet stores, promote them at trade shows, provide veterinary care for them and other activities which contribute millions to our economy.

According to an economic analysis undertaken by the Georgetown Economic Services, the Boa constrictor, which was not listed by the Fish and Wildlife Service, "Accounts for 70 percent of all imports and 70 to 80 percent of all revenues generated by these nine species." The Service estimated that the annual decrease in economic output of these snakes ranged from \$42 million to \$86.2 million. In addition, the House Committee on Oversight held a hearing on the proposed listing of the nine species and concluded in their report that, "Over the first ten years, combined loss could be between \$505 million and \$1.2 billion."

A witness at that hearing, Mr. David Barker of Texas, an internationally recognized authority on constrictor snakes, stated that, "This misguided regulation will destroy an entire industry, comprised almost exclusively of small and micro businesses. In short, if this rule goes into effect, it will destroy my life's work and investments for no rational reason."

During the course of this hearing, I hope to learn why the current Florida state law and recent Interior Department ruling seem, in some people's minds, insufficient in addressing the Everglades problem. More specifically, does H.R. 511 protect current breeders, pet store owners and small businesses who trade these species in Louisiana, Michigan, New York and Washington State.

I am pleased to recognize the distinguished ranking minority member for any statement he would like to make.