

# **E The Ehlers e-Newsletter**

Monday March 17, 2003

## *Last Week in the U.S. House of Representatives*

### **SUBCOMMITTEE APPROVES EHLERS' INVASIVE SPECIES RESEARCH**

**BILL** – The House Science Subcommittee on Environment, Technology, and Standards (ETS) Wednesday unanimously approved Congressman Vernon J. Ehlers' legislation to boost research on ways to prevent the introduction of non-native plants and animals in aquatic ecosystems in the U.S.

The National Aquatic Invasive Species Research Act, H.R. 1081, authorizes \$180 million over the next five years to combat the invasive species problem. It was introduced last week along with legislation sponsored by House Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans Chairman Wayne Gilchrest, R-Md. The bill now moves to the full Science Committee for consideration.

“It is time to change our strategy in dealing with aquatic invasive species,” said Ehlers, R-Grand Rapids. “It is time for Congress to realize that this threat continues to grow and will not go away unless we, as a nation, stop these pesky creatures from coming here. The time has come for us to move this legislation forward – invasive species don't respect political boundaries or timelines, and they are arriving here even as we speak.”

For a detailed press release on this bill, please go to our website at [http://www.house.gov/ehlers/press\\_releases/pr031303.htm](http://www.house.gov/ehlers/press_releases/pr031303.htm).

**MEDICAL LIABILITY LEGISLATION APPROVED BY HOUSE** – The House of Representatives Thursday passed H.R. 5, “the Help Efficient, Accessible, Low-Cost, Timely Healthcare (HEALTH) Act of 2003,” by a vote of 229-196. Congressman Ehlers supported the bill.

This legislation addresses the rapidly escalating health care crisis facing many states throughout our nation. Due to the rising cost of medical liability insurance, many doctors are shutting their doors, moving to other states or retiring because they can no longer afford their medical liability insurance premiums. This has left many patients without specialty doctors and quality health care.

Under the HEALTH Act, an injured patient may fully recover economic loss, without limitation. In addition to unlimited economic loss recovery, a claimant may recover up to \$250,000 for non-economic damages and up to two times the economic loss awarded for punitive damages. The bill does not preempt any state law that limits damages at specific amounts, whether they are higher or lower than the limits provided under H.R. 5.

**HOUSE APPROVES BILL TO INCREASE DEFIBRILLATOR ACCESS IN SCHOOLS** – On Wednesday, Congressman Ehlers joined with his colleagues in a 415-0 vote to approve legislation (H.R. 389) to allow funds, beginning with \$25 million in Fiscal Year 2003, to be spent to establish an information clearinghouse to increase access

to defibrillation in schools. Automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) are widely used by emergency personnel and health professionals to assist individuals suffering from sudden cardiac arrest. The use of AEDs has proven effective to save lives when following the “chain of survival plan” developed by the American Heart Association, which includes an immediate call to 911, early CPR and defibrillation, and early advanced life support. Because many schools also serve as community meeting places, several communities are considering placing AEDs in schools. In order to assist schools interested in installing AEDs, H.R. 389 clarifies that the public access defibrillation program grant dollars may also be used to establish information clearinghouses to assist in those efforts.

**EHLERS SUPPORTS LEGISLATION TO ASSIST ORGAN DONORS** – In an effort to encourage more people to participate in organ donor programs, the House of Representatives approved H.R. 399 which authorizes \$5 million a year in FY 2004 through 2008 for travel and subsistence expenses for qualifying individuals who make a living donation of their organs. The bill also authorizes the appropriation of \$15 million in FY 2004 for a program to increase public awareness of organ donation and for studies and demonstrations designed to increase the rate of organ donation. Congressman Ehlers supported the bill, which was approved Wednesday by a 425-3 vote.

## **THIS WEEK IN THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*March 17 – 21, 2003*

### **Monday, March 17, 2003**

The House will meet in a Pro Forma Session. There will be no votes.

### **Tuesday, March 18, 2003**

#### **Suspensions (5 bills):**

*(Bills on suspension are generally considered non-controversial and have reduced debate time, but require a two-thirds majority vote to be passed.)*

1. **H.Con.Res. 26** - Condemning the punishment of execution by stoning as a gross violation of human rights *(Sponsored by Rep. McCollum/International Relations Committee)*
2. **H.R. 868 - Nicaragua Property Dispute Settlement Act of 2003** - To require that certain claims for expropriation by the Government of Nicaragua meet certain requirements for purposes of the prohibition on foreign assistance to that government. *(Sponsored by Rep. Ballenger/International Relations Committee)*
3. **H.Res. 109** - Urging passage of a resolution addressing human rights in North Korea at the 59th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and calling on the Government of North Korea to respect and protect the human rights of its citizens *(Sponsored by Rep. Smith (NJ)/International Relations Committee)*
4. **H.R. 145** - Designation of the Ted Weiss Federal Building in New York, NY. *(Sponsored by Rep. Nadler/Transportation and Infrastructure Committee)*
5. **H.R. 878 - Armed Forces Tax Fairness Act of 2003** - to provide a special rule for members of the uniformed services and Foreign Service in determining the exclusion of gain from the sale of a principal residence and to restore the tax exempt status of death gratuity payments to members of the uniformed services. *(Sponsored by Rep. Thomas/Ways and Means Committee)*

## **Wednesday and Thursday, March 19 and 20, 2003**

### **Suspensions (5 bills):**

1. **H.R. 314- Mortgage Servicing Clarification Act** - To amend the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act to exempt mortgage servicers from certain requirements of the Act with respect to federally related mortgage loans secured by a first lien. *(Sponsored by Rep. Royce/Financial Services Committee)*
2. **H.R. 417 - Cibola Wildlife Refuge Boundary Correction** - To revoke a Public Land Order with respect to certain lands erroneously included in the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, California. *(Sponsored by Rep. Hunter/Resources Committee)*
3. **H.R. 699** - To direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a comprehensive study of the Rathdrum Prairie/Spokane Valley Aquifer, located in Idaho and Washington *(Sponsored by Rep. Nethercutt/Resources Committee)*
4. **H.R. 519** - To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of the San Gabriel River Watershed. *(Sponsored by Rep. Solis/Resources Committee)*
5. **H.Res. 132** - Resolution stating that the Pledge of Allegiance should be upheld - Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling in *Newdow v. United States Congress* is inconsistent with the Supreme Court's interpretation of the First Amendment and should be overturned. *(Sponsored by Rep. Ose/Judiciary Committee)*

**H.R. 975 - Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2003** – To amend the United States bankruptcy code. *(Sponsored by Rep. Sensenbrenner/Judiciary Committee/Financial Services Committee)*

**H.R. 1104 - Child Abduction Prevention Act** – To prevent and combat child abduction. *(Sponsored by Rep. Sensenbrenner/Judiciary Committee/Transportation and Infrastructure Committee/Education and the Workforce Committee)*

**H.Con Res. XXX (Not yet numbered)** - Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for FY 2004 – To set official budgetary numbers for Fiscal Year 2004. *(Sponsored by Rep. Nussle/Budget Committee)*

## **Friday, March 21, 2003**

There will be no votes in the House.

### **Historical Tidbits**

#### **On March 17 ...**

**1941** - The National Gallery of Art was officially opened by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Washington, DC.

**1985** - U.S. President Reagan agreed to a joint study with Canada on acid rain.