AMENDMENT TO RULES COMMITTEE PRINT 117–47

OFFERED BY MR. SOTO OF FLORIDA

Add at the end the following new title:

TITLE IV—DON YOUNG VETERANS ADVANCING CONSERVATION GRANT PROGRAM

SEC. 401. DON YOUNG VETERANS ADVANCING CONSERVATION GRANT PROGRAM.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Veterans are among the greatest assets of the United States.

(2) Veterans are highly skilled and trained individuals whose mission is to protect their communities.

(3) Studies show that community-focused growth and engagement assists veterans with mental health and combat-related trauma.

(4) SCUBA diving has been found to help improve mental, physical, and emotional health and has been specifically linked to improvement in the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.
(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall establish a program, to be known as the Don Young Veterans Advancing Conservation Grant Program, to award grants, on a competitive basis, to facilitate the training and employment of veterans for marine and coastal conservation activities.

(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may award a grant under this section to a non-profit organization that conducts marine and coastal conservation activities in partnership with Federal, State, or scientific organizations.

(B) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to receive a grant under this section, an organization shall submit to the Secretary an application in such form, at such time, and containing such information as the Secretary determines appropriate.

(3) USE OF FUNDS.—An organization awarded grant funds under this section may use such funds to train or employ veterans to conduct marine and coastal conservation activities, which may include—

(A) coral disease response;
(B) coral restoration and rehabilitation;
(C) invasive species eradication;
(D) marine debris removal;
(E) marine mammal and reptile rescue;
(F) scientific research and development;
(G) shark tagging;
(H) shipwreck mapping; and
(I) underwater survey work.

(4) COORDINATION.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall coordinate with the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(5) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section—

(A) $1,000,000 for fiscal year 2023;
(B) $1,200,000 for fiscal year 2024;
(C) $1,400,000 for fiscal year 2025;
(D) $1,600,000 for fiscal year 2026; and
(E) $1,800,000 for fiscal year 2027.

(6) SECRETARY.—In this section, the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.