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Republicans in Ohio Could Teach Capitol Hill a Lot About the Oceans

Voters believe U.S. Congress responsible for protecting the Flipper and Friends

Washington, DC – In a new poll, released today by Oceana, Republicans in Ohio overwhelmingly declared their support for protection of the oceans and its marine mammal inhabitants. The poll found that 90 percent of the voters surveyed agree that it is important to protect both the health of the oceans and marine mammals such as dolphins and whales. And, more than three-quarters of those surveyed believe that the U.S. Congress has a responsibility to protect the oceans as well as the marine mammals that live there.

“This poll affirms Oceana’s long-held belief that protecting the oceans is a personal and public virtue, and a bipartisan issue,” said Michael F. Hirshfield, senior vice president and chief scientist of Oceana.

The poll also found broad support (79%) for the Marine Mammal Protection Act, a landmark statute enacted by Congress more than 30 years ago to protect dolphins and whales from harm by human activities, and in particular, for the part of that law requiring commercial fishing operations to reduce their catch, injury, and kill of marine mammals to insignificant levels (76%). Voters also advocated enforcing this provision of the law with a firm deadline, and opposed elimination of this “Dolphin Deadline” by a 16-point margin.

“Republican voters are naturally suspicious of government intervention, but this poll demonstrates a belief that defense of the oceans and its inhabitants, which are shared and precious resources, should be within Congress’ purview,” concluded Kellyanne Conway, president of the polling company, inc. and a Republican strategist.

Ironically, these findings come at the same time that the Marine Mammal Protection Act is under attack by some members of Congress. H.R. 4075, sponsored by House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo (R-Calif.) would eliminate the “Dolphin Deadline” and weaken other existing provisions in the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Consideration of these proposals by the U.S. House of Representatives is reported to be prior to the August congressional recess, which begins July 31.

“They may be a long way from the beach, have little saltwater, but the Buckeyes could teach Congress a lot about the oceans,” concluded Hirshfield. “Congress should not weaken such a strongly supported law.”

The poll of 500 likely Republican voters in Ohio was conducted from June 22-25, 2006 by the polling company, inc., which is headquartered in Washington, DC. The margin of error is +/- 4.38.

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Oceana campaigns to protect and restore the world’s oceans. Our teams of marine scientists, economists, lawyers and advocates win specific and concrete policy changes to reduce pollution and to prevent the irreversible collapse of fish populations, marine mammals and other sea life. Global in scope and dedicated to conservation, Oceana has campaigners based in North America (Washington, DC; Juneau, AK; Los Angeles, CA), Europe (Madrid, Spain; Brussels, Belgium) and South America (Santiago, Chile). More than 300,000 members and e-activists in over 150 countries have already joined Oceana. For more information, please visit www.Oceana.org.

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