

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 263

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 21, 2019

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and
Public Works

AN ACT

To rename the Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge as the
Congressman Lester Wolff Oyster Bay National Wildlife
Refuge.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

2 The Congress finds the following:

3 (1) The Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge
4 was created in 1968. It is located on the north shore
5 of Long Island in eastern Nassau County, is the
6 largest refuge in the Long Island National Wildlife
7 Refuge Complex, and receives the most public use of
8 all the refuges in the Complex.

9 (2) The State of New York designated Oyster
10 Bay a significant coastal fish and wildlife habitat. It
11 is especially important for wintering waterfowl such
12 as black duck, greater scaup, bufflehead, canvasback
13 and long-tailed ducks. Management activities include
14 wetland restoration and protection of the natural
15 shoreline and vegetation.

16 (3) The refuge is unique in consisting solely of
17 bay bottom and adjacent shoreline up to the mean
18 high-tide mark. Ninety percent of New York's com-
19 mercial oyster harvest comes from the refuge. Visi-
20 tors enjoy fishing, wildlife observation, photography
21 and environmental education. The refuge is truly a
22 national treasure.

23 (4) Many visitors are unaware that were it not
24 for the tireless work and advocacy of then-freshman
25 Congressman Lester Wolff, this area would today be
26 an 8.5-mile causeway and bridge across Long Island

1 Sound between Oyster Bay and Rye, New York, con-
2 necting Nassau and Westchester Counties.

3 (5) The bridge was first proposed by Robert
4 Moses, the well-known New York City Planner, to
5 divert traffic from New York City. Former Governor
6 Nelson Rockefeller signed into law legislation cre-
7 ating the bridge authorized by the New York State
8 Legislature in 1967.

9 (6) Congressman Wolff, elected in 1964, quick-
10 ly decided the bridge would be an intrusion in a pris-
11 tine area, and that Long Island Sound was a very
12 precious resource that was despoiled. The conserva-
13 tion threats in the mid-1960s were suburban devel-
14 opment, wetland filling, and industrial pollution. The
15 fight to preserve this land became an enormous po-
16 litical fight and is considered to be a turning point
17 in New York State's environmental legacy.

18 (7) With State and local political and commu-
19 nity leaders, and especially the North Shore leaders
20 and the Committee to Save the Long Island Sound,
21 Congressman Wolff arranged a meeting with De-
22 partment of the Interior representatives and local
23 leaders where the idea of creating a wildlife refuge
24 from municipal and privately owned wetlands was
25 created.

1 (8) The Town of Oyster Bay, in which one end
2 of the bridge was to be located, deeded 5,000 acres
3 of wetlands to the United States to be maintained
4 as a Federal wildlife preserve. It was stipulated that
5 if the Department of the Interior agreed to an intru-
6 sion of the property, it would revert to the town.
7 Creating a Federal wildlife preserve provided the
8 land with Federal protection.

9 (9) Because of the vision, dedication, and perse-
10 verance of Congressman Lester Wolff, all of us and
11 future generations can enjoy the beauty and mag-
12 nificence of this refuge.

13 **SEC. 2. RENAMING THE OYSTER BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE**
14 **REFUGE AS THE CONGRESSMAN LESTER**
15 **WOLFF OYSTER BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE**
16 **REFUGE.**

17 (a) **RENAMING.**—The unit of the National Wildlife
18 Refuge System known as the Oyster Bay National Wildlife
19 Refuge and located near Oyster Bay, New York, shall be
20 known as the “Congressman Lester Wolff Oyster Bay Na-
21 tional Wildlife Refuge”.

22 (b) **REFERENCES.**—Any reference in a law, map, reg-
23 ulation, document, paper, or other record of the United
24 States to the unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System
25 known as the Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge is

