



## H.CON.RES. 300 – Recognizing the necessity for the United States to maintain its significant leadership role in improving the health and promoting the resiliency of coral reef ecosystems, and for other purposes

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### FLOOR SITUATION

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H.Con.Res. 300 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Madeline Bordallo (D-GU) on February 15, 2008. The resolution was referred to the House Natural Resources Committee, but was never considered.

H.Con.Res. 300 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on April ??, 2008.

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### SUMMARY

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H.Con.Res. 300 resolves that the House of Representatives recognizes the necessity for the United States to maintain its significant leadership role in improving the health and promoting the resiliency of coral reef ecosystems by:

- Strengthening awareness about ecological, economic, social, and cultural values of coral reefs and associated ecosystems;
- Improving understanding of the critical threats to coral reefs and generating both practical and innovative solutions to reduce those threats; and
- Initiating the prompt development and implementation of effective management strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of those ecosystems.

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### BACKGROUND

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The coral community is a system that includes a collection of biological communities, representing one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world. For this reason, coral reefs often are referred to as the "rainforests of the oceans."

There are generally three types of reefs. Fringing reefs are the most common type and they are found directly off the coastline. Barrier reefs are platforms separated from the adjacent land by a bay or lagoon. The longest barrier reefs occur off the coasts of Australia and Belize. Atolls are the third and final type of reef and rest on the tops of submerged volcanoes. They are usually circular or oval with a central lagoon. Parts of the atoll may emerge as islands. Over 300 atolls are found in the south Pacific.

Reefs are important fishery and nursery areas. They provide protection from erosion to coastlines and sand for beaches. However, reefs located near coastal populations are showing increasing signs of stress and are not faring as well as reefs which are more distant from centers of human population.

The United States has pledged support for the conservation of reefs and reef life. The United States is a participant in The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). The organization was announced at the First Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in December 1994 as outlined in the U.N. Charter. The ICRI is a partnership among governments, international organizations, and non-



government organizations. The goal of the initiative is to preserve coral reefs and related ecosystems by implementing relevant international conventions and agreements.

According to the State Department, the U.S. government spends approximately \$20 million annually on programs that support improved management and protection of international coral reefs through bilateral assistance to over 25 countries. In addition, approximately \$2 million goes directly to ICRI or to ICRI-initiated coral programs such as the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network and local workshops on reef protection and management.

The ICRI has designated 2008 as the International Year of the Reef.

For more information please visit the ICRI's website on the International Year of the Reef:

<http://www.iyor.org/>

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#### STAFF CONTACT

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