

Representative Wm. Lacy Clay

Waters, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee – Legislative Hearing

Opening Remarks on H.R. 1446, Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Reauthorization Act of 2019.

June 13, 2019

Thank you Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member McClintock, and members of this Committee for holding this hearing. I am pleased to speak in support of HR 1446, the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Reauthorization Act of 2019, bipartisan legislation that I was pleased to introduce with my friend and colleague Representative Fortenberry. Our bill will direct the U.S. Postal Service to sell the remaining copies of an existing specialty stamp featuring the Amur Tiger while taking a stand to protect endangered species and habitats.

The Multinational Species Conservation Fund semipostal stamp—commonly known as the “Tiger Stamp”, was originally created by an act of Congress in 2010 and first went on sale the following year. Let me be clear: semipostal stamps are first class postage, they incur no extra cost to the taxpayers and the Postal Service retains all normal revenue from the sale and use of these specialty items. Specialty stamps are sold at a higher price to support good causes, in this case, endangered wildlife. When the Tiger Stamp was last on sale, it cost 10 cents more than regular first-class postage with the extra proceeds being allocated to the Multinational Species Conservation Fund.

Since the stamp first went on sale in 2011, almost 51 million have been sold, raising \$5.7 million for wildlife conservation at no direct cost to U.S. taxpayers. The Tiger Stamp has funded over 100 projects in 35 countries. This sum was matched by almost \$19 million in additional funding provided by NGOs, foundations, private donors, foreign governments and local communities. Some examples of projects funded by the Tiger Stamp include: Training and deploying dogs to track and capture elephant poachers in Virunga National Park, the oldest national park in Africa that has been hit hard by wildlife traffickers in recent years. The reintroduction of endangered orangutans into the landscape on the island of Borneo in Indonesia with the support of local communities and stakeholders and training and equipping special operations teams to protect tigers in India, while working with local NGOs and communities to monitor the remaining tiger populations.

The law permits the U.S. Postal Service to continue to sell the stamp, but the law only required them to sell the stamp through the end of Fiscal Year 2017. Although 49 million Tiger Stamps remain, the U.S. Postal Service chose to take them off sale at the end of 2018. Both the House and Senate included report language in the Financial Services and General Government appropriations bill directing the Postal Service to put the Tiger Stamp back on sale. Although this report language was supported by the final Omnibus Appropriations Bill Congress passed in February, the Postal Service has declined to honor the language.

My bill simply directs the Postal Service to put the Tiger Stamp back on sale until the remaining 49 million are sold. Given that the Tiger Stamp has already been printed and paid for, this bill has no additional costs to taxpayers, while doing so much good around the world. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and I appreciate the opportunity to provide my remarks regarding this issue.

Rebuttal to Ranking Member McClintock

In response to the Ranking Member's concern that H.R. 1446 includes a provision that requires the United States Postal Service to print previously destroyed copies of the "Tiger Stamp", I would kindly ask the Ranking Member to please review the text again. The Ranking Member's claim most likely stems from Section 2(b)(2), which reads:

“...If the United States Postal Service destroys 1 or more Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamps before the date of enactment of this Act, the United States Postal Service shall print and sell the same number of such stamps on or after that date of enactment”.

To be clear, this provision is framed to ensure that the United States Postal Service can not simply destroy the current stock of stamps, thus avoiding putting them back on sale. This provision is in response to previous threats made by the United States Postal Service to shred the stamps. In a letter dated December 19, 2018 sent by the offices of Senator Rob Portman, Senator Tom Udall, and Senator Tom Carper to Postmaster General and CEO Megan Brennan, the Senators urged the Postal Service to refrain from destroying any of the semipostal stamps while Congress pursued legislation to reauthorize the program. I am submitting a copy of that letter, which references a previous version of the bill, for the record.

While I appreciate the Ranking Member's concerns, it is far more troubling that the stamps, for which taxpayers already paid, are collecting dust or might be destroyed.