

Washington, DC -- U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan has joined Florida reps. Connie Mack and Kathy Castor in introducing bipartisan legislation that would provide much-needed increased funding for peer-reviewed scientific research on red tide. Red tide is a naturally occurring algal bloom that causes respiratory problems in humans and kills fish and manatees. It also contaminates and kills shellfish and destroys coral reef and sea grass communities.

“In recent years, extended and severe bouts of red tide have killed sea life, sent people with respiratory problems to emergency rooms, and cost our economy millions of dollars in lost revenues,” said Buchanan. “This bill would fund research to better understand the issue. The results of these studies can be used to develop better methods to predict and detect red tide -- and if a consensus can be developed control and mitigate red tide.”

Specifically, the Save Our Shores Act would:

- Authorize \$90 million over the next three-years for peer-reviewed scientific research on red tide and other harmful algal blooms.
- Require that all federal funds authorized under the bill be used to conduct harmful algal bloom research be awarded on a competitive, scientifically peer-reviewed basis.
- Require an annual report to Congress on the results of this research.

“It is estimated that harmful algal blooms such as red tide cost \$82 million in economic losses across the country,” added Rep. Mack. “And for a region like Southwest Florida, the potential economic losses could be crippling. The sooner we can understand what factors may contribute to red tide, the sooner solutions can be developed to ensure red tide will not devastate our coastline and economy.”

“Both Congressman Mack and Congressman Buchanan have been long-time supporters of Mote Marine Laboratory’s efforts, and of protecting our aquatic environment,” said Dr. Kumar Mahadevan, Mote Marine Laboratory President. “Their introduction and support of this bill is important for Southwest Florida and the U.S. because of ongoing concerns about harmful algal blooms and their effects. The ‘Save Our Shores Act’ is laudable and we appreciate the congressmen’s efforts.”

Buchanan and Mack are expected to hold two press conferences next Tuesday, one in

Sarasota and one on the Pier in Sanibel Island, to discuss the legislation.