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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To prohibit certain commercial activities with respect to certain South Atlantic red snapper during certain periods, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To prohibit certain commercial activities with respect to certain South Atlantic red snapper during certain periods, and for other purposes.

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

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “South Atlantic Red
5 Snapper Fair Access Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) South Atlantic red snapper is a healthy
2 public fishery resource that supports recreational an-
3 glers, for-hire operators, coastal communities, fish-
4 ing tackle retailers, marinas, restaurants, lodging
5 providers, and other businesses throughout the
6 South Atlantic region.

7 (2) In recent years, recreational harvest of
8 South Atlantic red snapper in Federal waters has
9 been limited to extremely short seasons, including
10 one- and two-day seasons, despite historic abundance
11 and strong public demand for access to the fishery.

12 (3) Conversely, commercial harvest of South At-
13 lantic red snapper in Federal waters has remained
14 open for substantially longer periods, including com-
15 mercial seasons that have lasted for weeks or
16 months in recent years.

17 (4) Leading up to the 2026 recreational fishing
18 season, the States of Florida, Georgia, South Caro-
19 lina, and North Carolina, working with the National
20 Marine Fisheries Service, developed and received ap-
21 proval for State-led exempted fishing permit pilot
22 programs designed to improve recreational fisheries
23 data collection, test State management strategies,
24 reduce uncertainty, and provide more reasonable rec-
25 reational access to South Atlantic red snapper.

1 (5) Those State-led pilot programs were halted
2 by a preliminary injunction issued by the United
3 States District Court for the District of Columbia,
4 blocking the approved 2026 pilot seasons for the
5 States of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and
6 North Carolina, including Florida's season just
7 hours before it was scheduled to begin.

8 (6) While anglers continue to sit at the dock
9 awaiting a management system that allows reason-
10 able access to a healthy public fishery resource, con-
11 servation burdens and access restrictions should be
12 shared fairly across sectors.

13 **SEC. 3. PROHIBITION ON CERTAIN COMMERCIAL ACTIVI-**
14 **TIES WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN SOUTH AT-**
15 **LANTIC RED SNAPPER DURING CERTAIN PE-**
16 **RIODS.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—It is unlawful for any person, for
18 commercial purposes—

19 (1) to harvest any South Atlantic red snapper
20 from Federal waters during a covered period; or

21 (2) to sell, purchase, trade, barter, or offer for
22 sale any South Atlantic red snapper harvested from
23 Federal waters during a covered period.

24 (b) PENALTIES.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—An act described in sub-
2 section (a) shall be treated as an act described in
3 section 307 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Con-
4 servation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1857) for
5 purposes of sections 308 through 311 of that Act
6 (16 U.S.C. 1858–1860).

7 (2) ENFORCEMENT.—The Secretary shall en-
8 force this section as if a violation of subsection (a)
9 were a violation of section 307 of the Magnuson-Ste-
10 vens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16
11 U.S.C. 1857).

12 (c) IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 90 days after
13 the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretary
14 shall issue such regulations as are necessary to carry out
15 this section.

16 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

17 (1) COVERED PERIOD.—The term “covered pe-
18 riod” means a period during which the recreational
19 harvest of South Atlantic red snapper in Federal
20 waters is prohibited.

21 (2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
22 the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Di-
23 rector of the National Marine Fisheries Service.

24 (3) SOUTH ATLANTIC RED SNAPPER.—The
25 term “South Atlantic red snapper” means red snap-

1 per (*Lutjanus campechanus*) subject to management
2 under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snap-
3 per Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region
4 published by the South Atlantic Fishery Manage-
5 ment Council.