

Merkley, Panetta legislation to protect monarch butterfly

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Oregon's U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley teamed up with Representative Jimmy Panetta (D-CA) to announce the 2023 Monarch Action, Recovery and Conservation of Habitat (MONARCH) Act. The bill was introduced today in the U.S. Senate and will be introduced in the House of Representatives in the coming weeks. The bicameral MONARCH Act would help prevent the extinction of the western monarch butterfly and other critically important pollinators.

"We've all experienced the moment of childhood joy and excitement when we spot a butterfly dancing in the air," said Senator Merkley. "Though western monarch populations were already in peril, this year's extreme winter storms have hit overwintering monarchs hard and made addressing this threat even more urgent. Protecting monarch butterflies and other pollinators is a critical issue that requires sustainable solutions, and we must do everything we can to implement experts' conservation plans and save these species before time runs out."

“Fortunately, we in California’s 19th Congressional District have long treasured the western monarch butterflies who overwinter in our communities. Unfortunately, we recently are experiencing the significant decline of their population partly due to the shrinking of their habitats,” said Rep. Panetta. “That’s why I’m continuing to lead the House effort to provide the necessary federal investments to restore their habitat and help save the western monarch butterfly from extinction. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House and the Senate to conserve and restore their habitats so that together we can protect and perpetuate monarchs and other essential pollinators.”

The MONARCH Act would provide urgent protections for the struggling western monarch butterfly, an iconic and important butterfly whose population has dropped by 99% since the 1980s. This legislation would authorize \$62.5 million for projects aimed at conserving the western monarch and an additional \$62.5 million to implement the Western Monarch Butterfly Conservation Plan, which was prepared by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in January 2019. The \$62.5 million in funding for each effort would be divided into five annual installments of \$12.5 million.

The MONARCH Act is cosponsored by Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Martin Heinrich (D-NM).

Today’s introduction builds on a series of actions led by Senator Merkley to revive the populations of western monarch and other pollinators, like honeybees—including the introduction and passage of the bipartisan Monarch and Pollinator Highway Act; hosting, in partnership with the Department of Interior, a Monarch Butterfly Summit; investing \$1 million in the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Conservation Fund; establishing a Pollinator Conservation Center at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and, as Chair of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that funds the U.S. Department of Interior, securing \$7 million in funding for western monarch conservation activities.