



An Open Letter to Rep. Buddy Carter: Stop Spinning the Truth about Right Whales

Dear Representative Carter,

We hear you when you say you care about North Atlantic right whales. Unfortunately, your actions tell us otherwise.

We are watching as right whales disappear from our planet, largely due to [vessel strikes and entanglements in commercial fishing rope](#). There are currently fewer than 340 individuals remaining, and most critically, under 100 calving females. All the best scientists in our state and country tell us that we cannot afford to lose even one more whale.

We are deeply concerned about the number of misstatements put out by your office and others around NOAA's proposal to [expand its safe and effective vessel speed rule](#) to include yachts and other large ships 35-65 feet. **At best, the positions you have shared in recent weeks represent a misunderstanding of scientific data; at worst, they are scare tactics deliberately designed to protect powerful interest groups.**

First, there is not a “one in a million chance” that a whale will be killed by a small vessel—far from it. According to NOAA and GADNR data, since 2005 there have been at least [nine right whale collisions](#) involving vessels under 65 feet. Consider that we’re talking about fewer than 340 total whales in the entire population (smaller than most high schools in District 1), and the true risk becomes alarmingly high.

Second, the reality is there are no technological solutions available, or even in development, to prevent vessel strikes. Your proposal to “push pause” on the implementation of this new rule while we wait for some new, previously-unheard-of solution is tantamount to a death sentence for our whales.

It is false to claim we must choose between saving whales and jobs. Without any evidence, you're asking us to believe that entire industries and tens of thousands of jobs will be eliminated if we ask pilots of vessels and captains of yachts to go a little slower, for only a few months out of the year during winter calving season. That's like suggesting all taxi drivers would go out of business if the speed limit was lowered.

Finally, there is one area where we can agree—this absolutely is a safety issue. These semi-truck sized whales, which can top 50 tons, pose significant risks to everyone in the water. As those who have previously struck whales (like in 2021, when a [54-foot vessel struck and killed a right whale](#) named Infinity and her calf off St. Augustine) can attest, it is a dangerous scenario they never saw coming until it was too late—one that puts their vessels, their captains, the lives of their passengers, and the lives of the whales in serious jeopardy.



Representative Carter, with the fate of an entire species on the line, you must do better. While there's room for discussion, **you must begin with the facts—not talking points from powerful interest groups.**

Start by sitting down with the wildlife biologists located right here in coastal Georgia, who are on the front lines of studying these animals and regularly [put their lives on the line](#) to rescue them. They know our whales best and [have recommended](#) sensible compromises to improve the proposed rule. They can explain the science and urgency behind the NOAA proposal—and open a dialogue to help inform your positions.

We hope that your position is simply due to being misinformed—and not because you are choosing the interests of wealthy yacht owners and pilot captains who can't be bothered to go a few miles per hour slower in the wintertime, over the existence of an entire species. **Whatever the reason, it's not too late to do the right thing: we urge you to drop the spin and [listen to the experts.](#)**

Otherwise, when our children read about right whales in history books, they will know the truth: that you celebrated these animals with words but not in actions. And that when given the chance to save them, you decided it was too much work.

[Contact Georgia's Decision-Makers: Ask them to Listen to the Scientists and Protect Right Whales](#)