

Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act

Senator Coons (D-DE) and Senator Curtis (R-UT)

Tropical forests are among Earth's most important natural treasures. They house most of the world's biodiversity on land, help mitigate climate change, and provide livelihoods for local communities and Indigenous peoples who've called them home for centuries. Yet too often, protected areas with tropical forests lack sustained funding for successful long-term conservation. One way to bridge the gap has repeatedly proven successful over more than 25 years to balance economic needs with conservation priorities: debt-for-nature swaps, which allow foreign countries to restructure their debt to the United States in exchange for conserving their tropical forests and coral reefs.

Debt-for-nature swaps allow the United States to both manage its finances while also meeting the challenges posed by climate change, since developing countries often increase the production of raw materials to pay their debtors. The Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2026 is thus a prudent investment in the future of the country. Because of the distribution of tropical forests and coral reefs, it also allows the United States to strengthen partnerships in key regions, including Latin America and Southeast Asia.

Specifically, the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2026 would:

- Allocate 20 million dollars per fiscal year to continue the debt-for-nature swap program, allowing countries that meet certain criteria to be relieved of debt owed to the United States in exchange for protecting and preserving tropical forests and coral reefs.
- Protect biodiversity in key ecosystems around the world, which is essential for reducing the risk of pandemics and improving food security, by incentivizing conservation for countries that may not otherwise have the means to do so.
- Strengthen partnerships with key countries by restructuring their debt obligations while also delivering measurable environmental benefits that are relevant to U.S. climate, development, and strategic interests.

Endorsing Organizations: World Wildlife Fund, International Conservation Caucus Foundation, The Wildlife Conservation Society.