

## ROGERS PROPOSES BILL TO HALT ALLIGATOR POACHING

WASHINGTON, D.C.--Congressman Paul Rogers today introduced legislation to help ~~preserve~~ the alligator by establishing stiff fines and jail sentences for those involved in poaching.

The Rogers bill sets fines up to \$1,000 and jail sentences of six months for poachers or those who knowingly take illegal hides of alligators.

The legislation, called the endangered species bill, also protects other species which are threatened with extinction. The House passed a similar bill last session, but the Senate failed to act and the legislation died.

Rogers said that this year's bill is a stronger one because it can get at the middle-man in the poaching operation and the manufacturer where only the poacher was identified and subject to penalty last year.

"We have been hampered by the fact that the poacher could be prosecuted only if caught in the act," Rogers said. "Now, we can trace the hide from the manufacturer to the dealer to the poacher and level penalties on each if he knowingly handled an illegal skin.

"I think manufacturers will be hesitant in buying just any skin. And this in turn will, I hope, help dry up the market for illegal hides. And if law enforcement agents find a hide in the possession of a person, they had better be able to prove it was not taken illegally," Rogers said.

"We have taken the alligator for granted," Rogers said. "But the fact of the matter is that they are disappearing. If we do not push through this legislation and have state and local help in implementing it, the alligator may go the way of the egret."