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Region's congressional leaders push for Plum Island protection

Senators and congressmen request seek repeal

New Haven, Conn. – Connecticut and New York's federal legislators are asking Congressional budget-makers to repeal the decade-old order to sell Plum Island and to extend temporary protections for the island.

“Plum Island is an ecological treasure, and in both Connecticut and New York, residents on either side of the Long Island Sound don't want it to be sold off to the highest bidder,” **said Congressman Joe Courtney (CT-2)**. “That's why Congressman Zeldin and I have introduced a bipartisan amendment to preserve and protect the island for future generations once and for all, and it's why our efforts have had strong bipartisan support. While work to push that legislation across the finish line, blocking any attempt to sell the island in the meantime is crucial. This has been a years-long effort, and it's thanks to the external coalition of conservationists, local and state officials, and others on the ground that we've been able to come this far in the fight to save the island. I'm glad to be on their team once again as we work in Congress to help preserve Plum Island for research, education, and conservation.”

Plum Island, located off Orient Point, Long Island, is currently slated to be sold at auction after the Plum Island Animal Disease Center moves to Kansas. Legislation to permanently protect the island—known for its array of fragile wildlife habitat and historic buildings—has been introduced in Congress several times, and in December a bill was passed to delay the sale by one year. The FY2020 appropriations budget bill includes language preventing the Government Services Administration (GSA), the federal agency tasked with auctioning Plum Island to the highest bidder, from using any of its funding to market, process, or sell Plum Island over the next year. That legislation is the first time a bill aimed at protecting Plum Island has passed both the House and Senate and made its way to the President.

Now Senators Blumenthal, Murphy, and Gillibrand and Congressmen Lee Zeldin and Joe Courtney have written formal letters to the Homeland Security Subcommittees of their respective Appropriations Committees ([Senate letter](#), [House letter](#)) urging them to include in the FY2021 budget language repealing the 2009 law that orders sale of Plum Island Animal Disease Center assets. The House letter was also signed by Representatives Himes, King, Langevin, Larson, McGovern, Rice, Smith, and Suozzi.

The Senators sent an [additional letter](#) to the Senate Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee requesting that the defunding of GSA's sale activities be extended for another year.

“It’s important to understand that the current delay achieved by last year’s budget bill is temporary,” **said Chris Cryder, lands campaign manager at Save the Sound.** “That’s why Save the Sound and our fellow members of the Preserve Plum Island Coalition are continuing efforts for permanent protection. In partnership with The Nature Conservancy we’re currently finishing up a two-year process of developing a viable and broadly supported vision for the future of the island, and continuing to grow grassroots support to save the seals that rest on Plum Island’s rocks, the terns and plovers that run over its beaches, and the irreplaceable American history of Fort Terry. We are so grateful for the dedicated advocacy of our region’s lawmakers in this quest.”

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