Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Tom Rooney (FL-16) today introduced legislation to protect the Everglades and surrounding communities from dangerous, imported snakes like African rock pythons and boa constrictors. Rooney's bill would restrict the importation of specific breeds of snakes, which continue to cause extensive damage to the Everglades, into the United States.

"Banning the importation of these dangerous snakes is critical to the survival of the Everglades and the surrounding ecosystems," said Rooney. "These invasive predators are causing severe damage to our native wildlife, and they need to be eradicated.

"People buy these snakes as pets, but as they grow larger and more threatening, many owners soon realize that they cannot care for them safely, and they release them into the wild. Unfortunately, our ecosystems cannot accommodate these massive predators, and our native wildlife suffers."

Over the last decade, tens of thousands of Burmese Pythons were imported into the United States. To date, approximately 1,000 Burmese Pythons have been removed from the Everglades. Recently, Vero Beach Police Animal Control Officers captured a seven-foot-long boa constrictor in a resident's back yard.

Rooney's bill would add the following species of snakes to the "Lacey Act," effectively banning them from importation into the United States: Burmese python, northern African python, southern African python, reticulated python, green anaconda, yellow anaconda, Beni or Bolivian python, DeSchauensee's anaconda, and boa constrictor.

Congressman Rooney displays the skin of a 14-foot Burmese python caught in South Florida at a Judiciary Subcommittee hearing.