

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 877

To prohibit sale of shark fins, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 26, 2019

Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. MCSALLY, and Mr. SCHATZ) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To prohibit sale of shark fins, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Shark Fin Sales Elimi-
5 nation Act of 2019”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Sharks are critically important species for
9 their economic, cultural, and ecosystem value.

10 (2) Many shark populations are in peril world-
11 wide and are on the decline.

1 (3) One of the greatest threats to sharks is the
2 global trade in shark fins. It is estimated that fins
3 from as many as 73,000,000 sharks end up in the
4 global shark fin trade every year.

5 (4) Shark fins have no medicinal or nutritional
6 value.

7 (5) The trade in shark fins is primarily focused
8 on large coastal and pelagic species that grow slowly,
9 mature late, and have low reproduction rates.

10 (6) Shark fins are often removed and retained
11 while the remainder of a shark is discarded due to
12 the high market value of shark fins relative to other
13 parts of a shark.

14 (7) Shark fins are removed primarily to be com-
15 mercialized as a fungible commodity.

16 (8) Shark finning is the cruel practice in which
17 the fins of a shark are cut off on board a fishing
18 vessel at sea. The remainder of the animal is then
19 thrown back into the water to drown, starve, or die
20 a slow death.

21 (9) Although the United States has banned the
22 practice of shark finning aboard vessels in waters
23 controlled by the United States, there is no Federal
24 ban on the removal and sale of shark fins once the
25 fin is brought ashore.

1 (10) Once a shark fin is detached from the
2 body, it becomes impossible to determine whether
3 the shark was legally caught or the fin lawfully re-
4 moved.

5 (11) It is difficult to determine which species of
6 shark a fin was removed from, which is problematic
7 because some species are threatened with extinction.

8 (12) The States of Texas, Delaware, Hawaii, Il-
9 linois, Massachusetts, Maryland, New York, Oregon,
10 Rhode Island, California, Nevada, and Washington
11 and American Samoa, Guam, and the North Mar-
12 iana Islands have implemented bans on the sale of
13 shark fins.

14 (13) Shark fins possessed, transported, offered
15 for sale, sold, or purchased anywhere in the United
16 States are part of a large international market, hav-
17 ing a substantial and direct effect on interstate com-
18 merce.

19 (14) Abolition of the shark fin trade in the
20 United States will remove the United States from
21 the global shark fin market and will put the United
22 States in a stronger position to advocate internation-
23 ally for abolishing the shark fin trade in other coun-
24 tries.

1 **SEC. 3. PROHIBITION ON SALE OF SHARK FINS.**

2 (a) PROHIBITION.—Except as provided in section 4,
3 no person shall possess, transport, offer for sale, sell, or
4 purchase shark fins or products containing shark fins.

5 (b) PENALTY.—A violation of subsection (a) shall be
6 treated as an act prohibited by section 307 of the Magnu-
7 son-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
8 (16 U.S.C. 1857) and shall be penalized pursuant to sec-
9 tion 308(a) of that Act (16 U.S.C. 1858(a)), except that
10 the maximum civil penalty for each violation shall be
11 \$100,000, or the fair market value of the shark fins in-
12 volved, whichever is greater.

13 **SEC. 4. EXCEPTIONS.**

14 A person may possess a shark fin that was taken law-
15 fully under a State, territorial, or Federal license or per-
16 mit to take or land sharks, if the shark fin is separated
17 from the shark in a manner consistent with the license
18 or permit and is—

19 (1) destroyed or discarded upon separation;

20 (2) used for noncommercial subsistence pur-
21 poses in accordance with State or territorial law;

22 (3) used solely for display or research purposes
23 by a museum, college, or university, or other person
24 under a State or Federal permit to conduct non-
25 commercial scientific research; or

1 (4) retained by the license or permit holder for
2 a noncommercial purpose.

3 **SEC. 5. DOGFISH.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be a violation of sec-
5 tion 3 for any person to possess, transport, offer for sale,
6 sell, or purchase any fresh or frozen raw fin or tail from
7 any stock of the species *Mustelus canis* (smooth dogfish)
8 or *Squalus acanthias* (spiny dogfish).

9 (b) REPORT.—By not later than January 1, 2027,
10 the Secretary of Commerce shall review the exemption
11 contained in subsection (a) and shall prepare and submit
12 to Congress a report that includes a recommendation on
13 whether the exemption contained in subsection (a) should
14 continue or be terminated. In preparing such report and
15 making such recommendation, the Secretary shall analyze
16 factors including—

17 (1) the economic viability of dogfish fisheries
18 with and without the continuation of the exemption;

19 (2) the impact to ocean ecosystems of con-
20 tinuing or terminating the exemption;

21 (3) the impact on enforcement of the ban con-
22 tained in section 3 caused by the exemption; and

23 (4) the impact of the exemption on shark con-
24 servation.

1 **SEC. 6. DEFINITION OF SHARK FIN.**

2 In this Act, the term “shark fin” means—

3 (1) the raw or dried or otherwise processed de-
4 tached fin of a shark; or

5 (2) the raw or dried or otherwise processed de-
6 tached tail of a shark.

7 **SEC. 7. STATE AUTHORITY.**

8 Nothing in this Act may be construed to preclude,
9 deny, or limit any right of a State or territory to adopt
10 or enforce any regulation or standard that is more strin-
11 gent than a regulation or standard in effect under this
12 Act.

13 **SEC. 8. SEVERABILITY.**

14 If any provision of this Act or its application to any
15 person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity does
16 not affect other provisions or applications of this Act
17 which can be given effect without the invalid provision or
18 application, and to this end the provisions of this Act are
19 severable.

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