

WOW Legislative Hearing, Wednesday, May 8, 2019:
Rep. Soto Statement for H.R. 417, Lionfish

Thank you Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock for bringing my bill to a legislative hearing today. H.R. 417 would add live lionfish to the federal list of animal species prohibited from being imported into, or transported in, the United States. Additionally, this bill exempts deceased lionfish and lionfish products, which pose no invasive species risk, from the prohibition on importation or shipment. Thus, allowing lionfish meat to be shipped across the country for human consumption.

Lionfish are an invasive species. Native to the Indo-Pacific, lionfish are now established along the southeast coast of the U.S., the Caribbean, and in parts of the Gulf of Mexico. Since lionfish are not native to Atlantic waters, they have very few predators. They are carnivores that feed on small crustaceans and fish, including the young of important commercial fish species, such as snapper and grouper. They are dramatically affecting native ecosystems and local fishing economies.

H.R. 417 will prevent new lionfish from being transported into the United States, while allowing lionfish that have been caught, to be shipped across the country for human consumption. Lionfish are delicious and taste like a cross between snapper and grouper. Currently, lionfish are only consumed by Florida coastal communities and not allowed to be transported outside of the counties they're caught in.

This is a reasonable solution to address the issues associated with the invasion of lionfish.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing. I yield the balance of my time.