

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5694

To amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to protect the cultural practices and livelihoods of producers of Alaska Native handicrafts and marine mammal ivory products, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 6, 2025

Mr. BEGICH introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to protect the cultural practices and livelihoods of producers of Alaska Native handicrafts and marine mammal ivory products, 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 “Alaska’s Right To
5 Ivory Sales and Tradition Act” or the “ARTIST Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ALASKA NATIVE HANDICRAFTS.**

2 Section 101(b) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act
3 Of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1371(b)) is amended to read as fol-
4 lows:

5 “(b) EXEMPTION FOR ALASKAN NATIVES.—

6 “(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

7 “(A) AUTHENTIC ALASKA NATIVE ARTICLE
8 OF HANDICRAFTS AND CLOTHING.—The term
9 ‘authentic Alaska Native article of handicrafts
10 and clothing’ means an item composed wholly,
11 or in some significant respect, of natural mate-
12 rials that is produced, decorated, or fashioned
13 in the exercise of traditional Alaska Native
14 handicrafts by an Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo who
15 resides in Alaska and who dwells on the coast
16 of the North Pacific Ocean or the Arctic Ocean
17 without the use of a pantograph, multiple
18 carvers, or any other mass copying device.

19 “(B) MARINE MAMMAL IVORY.—The term
20 ‘marine mammal ivory’ includes a tooth or tusk
21 from a species of walrus, narwhal, or whale.

22 “(C) TRADITIONAL ALASKA NATIVE
23 HANDICRAFTS.—The term ‘traditional Alaska
24 Native handicrafts’ includes weaving, carving,
25 stitching, sewing, lacing, beading, drawing, and
26 painting.

1 “(2) EXEMPTION.—

2 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in
3 section 109, the provisions of this Act shall not
4 apply with respect to the taking of any marine
5 mammal by any Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo who
6 resides in Alaska and who dwells on the coast
7 of the North Pacific Ocean or the Arctic Ocean
8 if such taking—

9 “(i)(I) is for subsistence purposes; or

10 “(II) is done for purposes of creating
11 and selling authentic Alaska Native articles
12 of handicrafts and clothing; and

13 “(ii) in each case, is not accomplished
14 in a wasteful manner.

15 “(B) SPECIAL RULES.—

16 “(i) INTERSTATE COMMERCE OF
17 ITEMS.—An item presented as an authen-
18 tic Alaska Native article of handicrafts and
19 clothing may be sold in interstate com-
20 merce only if it comports with the defini-
21 tion provided in paragraph (1)(A).

22 “(ii) EDIBLE PORTION OF MARINE
23 MAMMAL.—Any edible portion of a marine
24 mammal taken for the primary purpose of
25 creating and selling authentic Alaska Na-

1 tive articles of handicrafts and clothing
2 may be sold in a native village or town in
3 Alaska or for native consumption.

4 “(3) LIMITATIONS.—

5 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding para-
6 graph (2), if, under this Act, the Secretary de-
7 termines any species or stock of marine mam-
8 mal subject to taking by Indians, Aleuts, or Es-
9 kimos to be depleted, the Secretary may pre-
10 scribe regulations upon the taking of such ma-
11 rine mammals by any Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo
12 described in this subsection.

13 “(B) CONTENT OF REGULATIONS.—The
14 regulations described in subparagraph (A) may
15 be established with reference to species or
16 stocks, geographical description of the area in-
17 cluded, the season for taking, or any other fac-
18 tors related to the reason for establishing such
19 regulations and consistent with the purposes of
20 this Act.

21 “(C) NOTICE AND HEARING; REMOVAL OF
22 REGULATIONS.—The regulations described in
23 subparagraph (A) shall be prescribed after no-
24 tice and hearing required by section 103 of this
25 title and shall be removed as soon as the Sec-

1 retary determines that the need for their im-
2 position has disappeared.

3 “(D) REGULATIONS TO BE SUPPORTED BY
4 SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.—In promulgating any
5 regulation or making any assessment pursuant
6 to a hearing or proceeding under this sub-
7 section or section 117(b)(2), or in making any
8 determination of depletion under this subsection
9 or finding regarding unmitigable adverse im-
10 pacts under subsection (a)(5) that affects
11 stocks or persons to which this subsection ap-
12 plies, the Secretary shall demonstrate in writing
13 (and make such writing publicly available on
14 the website of the Secretary) that, in consider-
15 ation of the whole record, including Indigenous
16 knowledge, such regulation, assessment, deter-
17 mination, or finding is supported by substantial
18 evidence. The preceding sentence shall only be
19 applicable in an action brought by one or more
20 Alaska Native organizations representing per-
21 sons to which this subsection applies.

22 “(4) PROHIBITIONS.—No State shall prohibit
23 the importation, sale, offer for sale, transfer, trade,
24 barter, possession, or possession with the intent to
25 sell, transfer, trade, or barter of marine mammal

1 ivory or marine mammal bone or baleen incorporated
2 under this title by an Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo, into
3 an authentic Alaska Native article of handicrafts
4 and clothing.”.

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