

# The Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act of 2016

**Lead Sponsors:** U.S. Senators Cory A. Booker (D-NJ) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)

**Original Cosponsors:** Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), John McCain (R-AZ), and Maria Cantwell (D-WA)

## **BACKGROUND**

Shark finning, which contributes to the decline of shark populations around the world, is the cruel practice in which the fins of a shark are cut off on board a fishing vessel at sea. The remainder of the animal is then thrown back into the water to drown, starve, or die a slow death.

**It is estimated that more than 70 million sharks are killed globally each year to support the international market for shark fins.**

Although the United States has banned the practice of shark finning aboard vessels in U.S.-controlled waters, there is no federal ban on the removal and sale of shark fins once brought ashore. Once a shark fin is detached from the body, it is almost impossible to determine whether the shark was legally caught or the fin lawfully removed. Determination of the species is also difficult, which is problematic given that some are threatened with extinction.

Eleven states (TX, DE, HI, IL, MA, MD, NY, OR, RI, CA, WA) and three territories (American Samoa, Guam, and the North Mariana Islands), have already implemented bans on the sale of fins. A proposed ban is currently pending in New Jersey.

Between 2000 and 2011, the U.S. imported a yearly average of 36 tons of dried shark fins, including from countries that have few or no protections in place for sharks.

### **When Sharks are Killed, the Entire Ocean Suffers.**

Sharks play a critical role in the ocean ecosystem by regulating the populations of sea life below them in the food web. By doing this, sharks help to ensure the abundance of popular recreational and commercial fish stocks. Sharks grow slowly and reproduce late in their lives, making them especially vulnerable to overexploitation and population loss.

## **SUMMARY**

The complete ban on the sale of shark fins in the Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act of 2016 will:

- Remove the U.S. contribution of shark fins to the global market;
- Allow for stronger enforcement of the “no finning” ban in the United States; and
- Put the U.S. in a stronger position to advocate internationally for abolishing the fin trade in other countries.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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