

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 225

BY REPRESENTATIVES LEOPOLD, BILLIOT, CONNICK, GAROFALO, GISCLAIR,
HARRISON, AND ST. GERMAIN

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To memorialize the United States Congress to take such actions as are necessary to work to adopt policies that will help with the stability and the viability of the domestic shrimp industry, including support for the Imported Seafood Safety Standards Act.

WHEREAS, consumption of seafood is one of the fastest growing areas of our nation's food supply with shrimp being one of the most consumed seafood products in the United States; and

WHEREAS, over three-fourths of the seafood consumed in the United States is imported from other countries around the world with shrimp as the leading fresh or frozen product imported into the United States accounting for about twenty-eight percent of all seafood imports by weight; and

WHEREAS, most of the shrimp consumed in the United States is grown in man-made ponds along the coasts of Thailand, Vietnam, Ecuador, and other tropical countries rather than being harvested from the waters of the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the countries that produce most of the shrimp consumed worldwide support their shrimp hatcheries with large state subsidies to keep the price of their shrimp lower than the prices that our domestic Gulf of Mexico shrimpers need to charge in order to just break even; and

WHEREAS, the Tariff Act of 1930, a law originally introduced to protect farmers from imports, allows United States industries to “petition the government for relief from imports that benefit from subsidies provided through foreign government programs”; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Commerce launched an investigation in 2013 to determine whether there was sufficient evidence to support the claim that the seven largest shrimp-producing countries were subsidizing their shrimp industries, an investigation that will run concurrently with the International Trade Commission's (ITC) examination of whether the subsidies are causing significant injury to United States producers with both investigations needing to call for countervailing duties before any penalties could be applied; and

WHEREAS, in September 2013, the ITC voted to throw out the shrimp countervailing duty case based on the fact that injury to the domestic industry was not proven, thus removing the possibility of a countervailing duty and terminating the shrimp subsidy investigation against Ecuador, China, India, Malaysia, and Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, the ITC's decision has had a devastating impact on the domestic shrimp industry, including the shrimpers trawling the Gulf of Mexico and landing their shrimp at Louisiana docks; and

WHEREAS, without relief from the unfair foreign competition undercutting the domestic shrimp prices, the prices that shrimpers are getting at the dock have dropped over fifty percent from last year making it almost impossible for shrimpers to earn enough money to provide for their families; and

WHEREAS, the Imported Seafood Safety Standards Act introduced in the United States Senate by Louisiana Senator David Vitter is being supported by the American Shrimp Processors Association and it specifically targets foreign food imported into the United States with hopes of tightening testing standards, increasing inspection standards on foreign imported seafood, requiring placement of United States safety standards for foreign exporters, and increasing severe penalties for exporters who fail food safety inspections, ultimately benefitting the American shrimp industry.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby memorialize the United States Congress to take such actions as are necessary to work to adopt policies that will help with the stability and the viability of the domestic shrimp industry including support for the Imported Seafood Safety Standards Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the presiding officers of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States of America and to each member of the Louisiana congressional delegation.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE