

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 8, 2018

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Leahy:

We are writing to support legislative language in the FY18 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill that would ensure the Department of Commerce includes shrimp in its full implementation of the Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP). Specifically, we support the language in Section 513, which requires SIMP to include shrimp within 30 days of enactment of the bill. We advocate the inclusion of this important language in the final FY18 omnibus appropriations legislation.

We appreciate the Administration's efforts through the Department of Commerce to implement SIMP to provide better traceability and transparency on seafood imports. By requiring additional data at the point of entry, SIMP establishes the traceability requirements needed to prevent seafood fraud. January 1, 2018, was the mandatory compliance date for 11 of 13 identified priority species. Unfortunately, shrimp imports were exempted from this compliance date.

We are concerned about the indefinite stay on shrimp imports compliance with SIMP implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service. More than 65 percent of seafood imports covered by SIMP are shrimp. With full implementation, the American people would have better, timelier access to health and safety information for this widely consumed product.

Our primary sources of imported shrimp include India, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. These countries all export heavily subsidized, farm-raised shrimp, in contrast to the vast majority of American shrimp, which is wild-caught. We believe that SIMP is a key step to restoring a level playing field for the U.S. shrimp industry.

Serious concerns exist about the use of antibiotics in some shrimp imports. According to a 2017 GAO report on seafood safety, "as imports of farmed seafood increase, so too do the concerns over the presence of drug residues....The use of unapproved drugs or the misuse of approved drugs may result in unsafe residues in seafood."¹ Including shrimp in SIMP would greatly reduce this risk to U.S. consumers.

There are also concerns about the suspect labor practices that produce some imported shrimp. For example, a 2015 Associated Press investigation in Thailand reported, "Pervasive

¹ Government Accountability Office. *Imported Seafood Safety: FDA and USDA Could Strengthen Efforts to Prevent Unsafe Drug Residues*. GAO-17-443. 2017. Available on-line at: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/688431.pdf>.

human trafficking has helped turn Thailand into one of the world's biggest shrimp providers."² Increased transparency in the in the global shrimp industry would help to address this problem.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue. We are committed to assist you in preserving this important language, both for U.S. consumers and our domestic shrimp industry.

Sincerely,



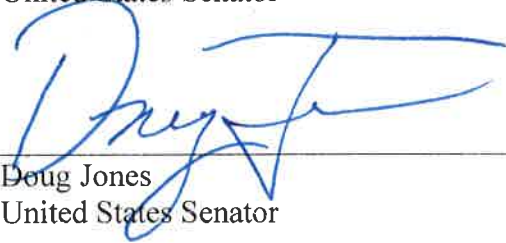
Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



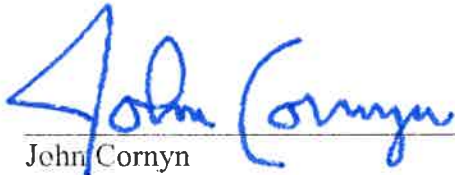
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Bill Nelson
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Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

² Margie Mason, Robin McDowell, Martha Mendoza, and Esther Htsuan. *Global Supermarkets Selling Shrimp Peeled by Slaves*. The Associated Press. December 14, 2015. Available on-line at: <https://www.ap.org/explore/seafood-from-slaves/global-supermarkets-selling-shrimp-peeled-by-slaves.html>.