

2023 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 134

BY REPRESENTATIVES KERNER, AMEDEE, BROWN, BRYANT, CARPENTER, CARRIER, WILFORD CARTER, GAROFALO, GLOVER, ILLG, LACOMBE, MACK, MAGEE, MARCELLE, NEWELL, ORGERON, SCHEXNAYDER, SELDERS, ST. BLANC, THOMPSON, AND WHEAT

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To create the Imported Seafood Safety Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding funding for imported seafood testing and enforcement mechanisms required for the Louisiana Department of Health to effectively protect Louisiana consumers.

WHEREAS, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in 2019 the United States imported six billion pounds of edible seafood products; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that over half of the imported seafood consumed in the United States is from aquaculture rather than wild-caught; and

WHEREAS, only a very small amount of imported seafood is tested for harmful substances by the federal government; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana State University School of Renewable Natural Resources published a 2020 paper titled "Determination of Sulfite and Antimicrobial Residue in Imported Shrimp to the USA", which presented findings from a study of imported shrimp purchased from retail stores in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, a screening of these shrimp for sulfites and residues from antimicrobial drugs found the following: (1) five percent of the shrimp contained malachite green, (2) seven percent contained oxytetracycline, (3) seventeen percent contained fluoroquinolone, and (4) seventy percent contained nitrofurantoin; and

WHEREAS, all of these substances have been banned by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in domestic aquaculture operations; and

WHEREAS, although the FDA requires that food products exposed to sulfites must include a label with a statement about the presence of sulfites, of the forty-three percent of these locally purchased shrimp found to contain sulfites, not one package complied with this labeling requirement; and

WHEREAS, the drug and sulfite residues included in this screening can be harmful to human health during both handling and consumption and have been known to cause all of the following: liver damage and tumors, reproductive abnormalities, cardiac arrhythmia, renal failure, hemolysis, asthma attacks, and allergic reactions; and

WHEREAS, the results of this study confirm that existing screening and enforcement measures for imported seafood are insufficient; whatever the percentage of imports inspected may be, seafood is currently being imported that contains unsafe substances that put Louisiana consumers at risk; and

WHEREAS, in order to protect the health and safety of Louisiana consumers, the Louisiana Department of Health is statutorily authorized to sample and test imported seafood; and

WHEREAS, current law requires commercial seafood permit holders that import seafood to pay a nominal annual "seafood safety fee" of one hundred dollars; and

WHEREAS, the department requires increased funding in order to cover the costs of the tests and increase the frequency of testing.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby establish the Imported Seafood Safety Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding funding for the testing of imported seafood, what a fair fee would be for commercial distributors of imported seafood in Louisiana, and what enforcement mechanisms should be in place for the Louisiana Department of Health to be able to effectively carry out its mandate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Imported Seafood Safety Task Force shall be composed of the following members:

- (1) The secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health or his designee.
- (2) The secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries or his designee.
- (3) One member appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives.

(4) One member appointed by the president of the Senate.

(5) A representative of commercial fisherman, appointed by the secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

(6) One member appointed by the Shrimp Task Force.

(7) A representative of the Louisiana Restaurant Association.

(8) A representative of the Louisiana Retailers Association.

(9) A representative of the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall submit a detailed written report of its findings to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment prior to the 2024 Regular Session of the Legislature.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health, the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and the Shrimp Task Force.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE