

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHJM 4008

*As Passed House
March 14, 1991*

Brief Description: Requesting Congress and the President to ban driftnets.

Sponsor(s): Representatives R. King, Hochstatter, Cole, Orr, Haugen, Basich, Wilson, Spanel, Fuhrman, Padden, Winsley, D. Sommers, Bowman, Paris, May, Miller, Riley, Brough, Silver, Nealey, Forner, Wynne, Sheldon, Fraser, Phillips, Jones, Brumsickle, Nelson, Neher, Horn, Casada, H. Myers, Leonard, Moyer, Sprenkle, Brekke and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife, February 22, 1991, DPA;
Passed House, March 14, 1991, 93-0.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FISHERIES & WILDLIFE**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 8 members: Representatives R. King, Chair; Morris, Vice Chair; Wilson, Ranking Minority Member; Cole; Hochstatter; Orr; Padden; and Spanel.

Staff: Keitlyn Watson (786-7310).

Background: Driftnets are gillnet fishing gear which are allowed to drift with prevailing water currents. The use of driftnets in the high seas caught public attention in the mid-1980's. Issues of concern to the public included sensitivity of marine life to plastics, and the increased interception of Alaska salmon by foreign squid driftnet fleets in the North Pacific Ocean.

The 100th Congress passed the Driftnet Impact Monitoring, Assessment, and Control Act of 1987. The act directed the negotiation of cooperative driftnet monitoring, assessment, and enforcement agreements with foreign governments using driftnets in the North Pacific Ocean and required the secretary of commerce to evaluate several aspects of driftnet control technology. Additional concerns over driftnet fishing for albacore tuna in the South Pacific Ocean resulted in the adoption of the Wellington Convention agreement by 20 South Pacific nations, which bans driftnet

fishing in the South Pacific Ocean by 1991. The 1989 United Nations General Assembly agreed to a non-binding resolution on high seas driftnetting. The resolution called for an immediate reduction of large-scale driftnet fishing in the South Pacific followed by a ban on driftnet fishing in the South Pacific by July 1, 1991, and worldwide prohibition one year later. Driftnet fleets in the South Pacific have been substantially reduced as a result of these actions. In 1989, the Province of British Columbia, and the states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, and Hawaii jointly issued a proclamation to the federal governments of Canada and the United States proposing steps to reduce the impact of high seas driftnet squid fleets on salmonids, albacore, seabirds, and marine mammals.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature respectfully prays to the president and Congress to seek through all legal efforts in all available international forums an international ban on driftnet fishing on the high seas.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: The legislative message to Congress will assist in obtaining a needed ban on high seas driftnets. These nets are damaging to non-target fisheries.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Mitch Kink, Alaska Independent Fisherman's Marketing Association (in favor, with concerns: bill should be limited to high seas driftnets and state such); Jim King, Washington State Sportsmen's Council (in favor); and Ed Manary, Department of Fisheries (in favor).