



State House Votes To Ban Shark Fins, Lawmaker Wonders Why

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Shark fins in a bag await delivery at a wholesale warehouse in Hong Kong (Credit: Laurent Fievet/CBS San Francisco)

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (CBS) — Environmentalists are applauding, and at least one state representative is scratching his head, after the Illinois House voted to ban the possession of shark fins.

As WBBM Newsradio's Mike Krauser reports, HB 4119, sponsored by state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), would forbid the possession, sale or trade of any shark fin, be it "raw, dried or otherwise processed."

LISTEN: WBBM Newsradio's Mike Krauser reports

State Rep. Jim Durkin (R-Countryside) finds the very notion of focusing on shark fins absurd.

"Rome is burning, and we are banning shark fins," Durkin said.

The state is \$9 billion behind paying vendors, and has serious and ongoing budget issues stemming from pension costs and Medicare.

"We are sitting in a sea of debt, and we are passing bills that do nothing to solve the problems in the end," Durkin said.

Environmentalists say shark populations are dropping dramatically because of overfishing. Shark fin soup is a delicacy in some Asian cultures.

But critics of shark finning, which already is restricted in U.S. waters, estimate that fishermen kill 73 million sharks each year for their fins, [CBS San Francisco reported last fall](#). They said it is particularly cruel because the wounded sharks often are returned to the ocean to die after their fins are removed.

“Sharks need their fins, and we don’t,” Jennifer Fearing, the Humane Society’s California director told CBS San Francisco. “The momentum to protect sharks globally has taken a huge step forward.”

California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington state have already approved bans on the shark fin trade. Bans are also pending in New York state and Maryland.

When the California bill was approved last October, Gov. Jerry Brown said action needed to be taken.

“The practice of cutting the fins off of living sharks and dumping them back in the ocean is not only cruel, but it harms the health of our oceans,” Brown wrote in an October statement.

The Illinois bill must win approval from the state Senate before going on to Gov. Pat Quinn.