

The Senate

EIGHTH OLBIIL ERA KELULAU
(Palau National Congress)

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COMMITTEE ON
RESOURCES, COMMERCE,
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Stand. Com. Rep. No. 8-93

RE: Senate Bill No. 8-44

Date: 8.04.09

The Honorable Mlib Tmetuchl
President of the Senate
Eighth Olbiil Era Kelulau
Ngerulmud, Republic of Palau 96940

Dear Mr. President:

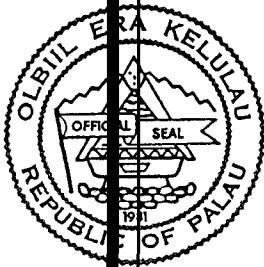
Your Committee on Resources, Commerce, Trade and Development, to which was referred Senate Bill No. 8-44, entitled:

A SENATE BILL To amend Title 27 of the Palau national Code to allow for the commercial fishing of sharks within Palau's Exclusive Economic Zone, to impose a tax on the export of sharks and tuna-like species, and for other related purposes.

begs leave to report as follows.

The purpose of the subject Bill is evident from its title.

This Bill aims to permit shark fishing in the waters of the Republic of Palau in the hopes of generating revenues to fund other government agencies and programs. However, for following reasons the Committee finds it unrealistic and unsustainable at this time. First, the Republic of Palau is a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity. This Convention has 191 parties with a goal to sustain the diversity of life on earth. Second, the passage of this bill will negatively impact the tourism industry which is our nation's largest revenue generating industry. The tourism industry generates over \$60 million annually in the Republic. This includes divers who come to Palau for shark-watching which bolster's Palau's economy and provides a substantial tax base, which Palau uses to fund other services for the public. The Committee finds it highly risky to potentially endanger not only Palau's environment, but also Palau's tourism industry, a contributor to this country's economy.



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Finally, Palau does not have sufficient capacity to monitor its Exclusive Economic Zone to ensure that those sharks brought back to Malakal are in fact by-catch and not directly targeted by commercial fishing companies. Thus any loosening of Palau's anti-shark fishing laws would open the door to potential abuse by commercial fishing companies, which would seriously harm the fragile shark population in this region. Based these facts, the Committee cannot endorse this Bill.


On March 20, 2009, at the NgaraAmayong Cultural Center, the Palau Visitors Authority, Belau Tourism Association and Palau Chamber of Commerce conducted a Public Forum on Tourism. During the Forum, Senate Bill No. 8-44 was publicly discussed and an overwhelming number of people who attended the forum did not support or endorse the legislation. The Committee is attaching copies of a petition carrying over a thousand names around the globe, as well as numerous written comments from local and off-island tour operators, divers, non-governmental offices, environmental offices and frequent and future visitors to Palau opposing the passage of Senate Bill No. 8-44.

Based on the foregoing, the Committee recommends, pursuant to its authority under Senate Rules and Procedure 6 (a), that Senate Bill No. 8-44 be tabled, and that the Senate takes no further action on it.


Respectfully submitted by:

THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, COMMERCE, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

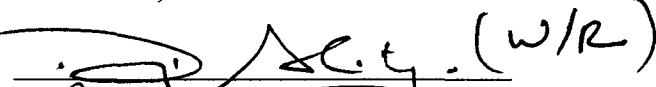

Adalbert Eledui, Chairman


Kathy Kesolei, Member


Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr., Member


Surangel S. Whipps, Jr., Member

attachments

 (w/r)
Regis Akitaya, Vice Chairman


Alfonso N. Diaz, Member


Raynold B. Oilouch, Member