



SENATORS INTRODUCE BILL TO PROTECT BILLFISH Amendment Clarifies Intent of 2012 Conservation Act

February 16, 2017. A bipartisan group of senators introduced legislation yesterday to amend the Billfish Conservation Act of 2012, making it clear that the original intent of the BCA was to prohibit sales of any marlin, spearfish or sailfish in the mainland United States, regardless of who catches them or where. The bill was filed by Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Joe Manchin (D-WV).

“On behalf of anglers and conservationists around the country, we are grateful to these four senators for stepping up and taking this action,” said IGFA president Rob Kramer and Wild Oceans president Ken Hinman in a joint statement. “This simple bill, although called a ‘technical amendment,’ will ensure that billfish receive the full protections from commercial exploitation that the Billfish Conservation Act intended.”

The landmark law has been in force since 2013, preventing an estimated 30,000 foreign-caught billfish a year from being sold in U.S. markets on the mainland, where U.S. commercial fishermen have been prohibited from selling blue, white and striped marlin, spearfish and sailfish for decades.

The Act, however, provides an exemption for the “traditional fisheries and markets” of Hawaii and Pacific island territories. The authors of the BCA said at the time that the exemption was meant for local sales and consumption only, but the law itself was silent on whether or not fish could be sold outside Hawaii, creating a loophole that needed to be closed.

The senate bill would not only close mainland markets to all Pacific billfish including those caught under the Hawaii exemption, it would strengthen enforcement of the billfish prohibition nationwide while minimizing regulatory costs.

IGFA (www.igfa.org) and Wild Oceans (wildoceans.org) partnered to form the *Take Marlin Off the Menu* campaign in 2009, working together to pass the BCA and ever since to make sure it is implemented as intended.
