

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 17, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our concern regarding a proposal before the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to suspend the moratorium on commercial whaling for the next ten years. The moratorium has saved tens of thousands of whales from exploitation, and we urge you to oppose any agreement that would undermine its effectiveness.

We understand that your Administration has engaged in negotiations related to the future of the IWC with the goal of improving whale conservation, reducing the annual number of whales killed worldwide, and ending commercial whaling now conducted under the guise of science. We appreciate that effort and support such a goal. However, the negotiations have not achieved that intended result.

The proposal would legitimize commercial whaling, set quotas that are not based on sound scientific principles, and reward those countries that have circumvented the moratorium by granting them exclusive quotas to hunt whales commercially. It would also authorize commercial whaling in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary, an internationally designated "safe haven" established in 1994 to protect more than 80% of the world's whales.

Moreover, the proposal does not contain sufficient enforcement mechanisms to eliminate existing loopholes in the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling that have allowed Japan, Norway, and Iceland to continue whaling despite the moratorium. Instead, it would legitimize the behavior of these countries by granting them quotas to harvest whales. There is also no certainty that the proposal would prevent other nations that are party to the IWC from initiating whaling under these loopholes.

Finally, despite gaining very little from this proposal, citizens from the U.S. and the majority of other IWC countries who oppose commercial whaling would be asked to subsidize the resumption of this activity through the dues that they pay to the IWC and the cost of supporting their own delegates' oversight of the implementation of the agreement.

Mr. President, we respectfully urge your Administration to oppose the proposal before the International Whaling Commission that would suspend the 1986 global moratorium on whaling, encourage other countries to do the same, and work toward a new agreement that would guarantee the conservation of whale populations for future generations.

Sincerely,



Susan Collins



Carl Levin


Dianne Feinstein


David Vitter


Barbara Boxer


Joseph Lieberman


Ron Wyden


Patty Murray


Sherrod Brown


Russ Feingold


Kirsten Gillibrand


Tom Harkin


Frank Lautenberg


Roland Burris


Scott Brown


Bernie Sanders

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