

Bipartisan bill reintroduced to ban commercial octopus farming in US

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On the occasion of World Ocean Day, U.S. Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), co-chairs of the bipartisan Senate Oceans Caucus, have reintroduced the Opposing the Cultivation and Trade of Octopus Produced through Unethical Strategies (OCTOPUS) Act—a landmark piece of legislation that would preemptively prohibit commercial octopus farming in the United States and ban the import of farmed octopus from other countries.

The reintroduction follows growing international concern about the ethical and environmental implications of farming octopuses, highly intelligent and sentient animals. In August, over 100 scientists from around the world endorsed the legislation in *Science*, a leading academic journal, calling for immediate Congressional action.

“Octopuses are smart, sentient creatures that have no business cooped up on commercial farms,” said Senator Whitehouse. “Congress should heed the call of ocean scientists and quickly pass our bill to keep these remarkable animals wild and free in our oceans.”

Senator Murkowski emphasised the bill’s importance for both sustainability and animal welfare: “By closing the door on commercial octopus farming, this legislation helps protect Alaska’s marine ecosystems and wild-caught fisheries—some of the most sustainable in the world.”

Octopuses are known for their complex behaviours and cognitive abilities, including tool use, problem-solving, and long-term memory. A review of more than 300 studies concluded that octopuses are capable of experiencing pain, pleasure, and emotional distress, making their confinement in commercial farms both ethically and scientifically troubling.

Key provisions of the OCTOPUS Act include:

A ban on commercial octopus aquaculture within the U.S..

A prohibition on importing farmed octopus or products containing it;

Mandatory certification from importers to ensure compliance.

Data collection requirements by NOAA on octopus harvesting practices in trade programs.

The bill is a proactive step toward reinforcing the United States's global leadership in animal welfare and marine conservation, and sets a precedent for science-based legislation addressing emerging threats to ocean ecosystems.