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Hawaii Senate urged to drop ornamental fish ban

ALEXANDRIA, VA — Hawaii fishers are joining with a national animal welfare advocacy organization to urge the Hawaii Senate to halt a bill that would ban ornamental fishing.

“[Hawaii Senate Bill 2003](#) will close one of, if not **the**, most responsible fisheries in the world,” said Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) Vice President Robert Likins. “This bill will put people out of work and risk the lives of licensed divers by limiting their ability to have licensed, qualified diving partners. And it will do nothing to protect Hawaii’s pristine waters.”

Hawaii Senate Bill 2003, which is being heard by the Senate Land & Water Committee on Friday, bans the issue of all new aquarium fishing licenses starting on July 1, 2018. Combined with a recent Department of Labor and Natural Resources decision to invalidate all licenses until Hawaii Environmental Policy Act (HEPA) procedures are applied to aquarium fishing, Likins and Hawaiian fishermen say House Bill 2003 could cause the industry could grind to a halt.

“PIJAC has worked with fishers and scientists to defend this environmentally and economically sound industry,” said Likins. “The fact is that study after study has concluded aquarium fishing is sustainable and has no appreciable impact on the environment, as Governor Ige rightly concluded when he vetoed Senate Bill 1240 last year. PIJAC and our members in Hawaii are ready and eager to engage in good-faith discussions with lawmakers to follow through on promises made to further advance the environmental stewardship by the trade.”

“Regretfully,” concluded Likins, “Senate Bill 2003 will put people in danger or out of work for no reason other than to kowtow to extreme activists’ viewpoints – not sound science, the safety of divers, or the needs of families across the islands.”

In addition to representing fishers and divers to Hawaii lawmakers, PIJAC has been a litigant in several court decisions related to the HEPA requirements issued by the Hawaii Supreme Court.

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Since 1970, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) has protected pets, pet owners and the pet industry – promoting responsible pet ownership and animal welfare, fostering environmental stewardship, and ensuring the availability of pets. PIJAC members include retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, wholesale distributors, manufacturers’ representatives, pet hobbyists, and other trade organizations.