

Bipartisan US lawmakers Graves, Peltola team up to push for ban on Indian shrimp

'We urge you to implement a ban on the import of Indian shrimp until the situation can be further analyzed' -- US representatives Garret Graves and Mary Sattler Peltola

By [Jason Huffman](#) | March 27, 2024 15:37 GMT



□ The US capitol. Credit: flysnowfly / Shutterstock

US representatives Garret Graves and Mary Sattler Peltola, a Louisiana Republican and an Alaska Democrat, are working together to ratchet up the attack on farmed shrimp from India, asking the White House to temporarily ban the product.

Their action is just the latest in response to the [bombshell investigative report](#) dropped on March 20 by the Outlaw Oceans Project (OOP). OOP, the same journalism outfit that earlier reported on forced labor in Chinese seafood processing plants, shared evidence provided by Joshua Farinella, a former general manager at Choice Canning's Amalapuram factory in Andhra Pradesh, India, that the company allegedly mistreated its workers and shipped antibiotic-positive shrimp to the US.

The Choice Group has denied the allegations of the report, as reported by [Undercurrent News](#).

In their [two-page letter](#) sent to president Joe Biden on Friday (March 22), Graves and Peltola refer to the "damning evidence" provided by "someone in the industry." They note that 40% of the shrimp consumed in the US comes from India, and express concerns about the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) not adequately testing the imports.

"Even with the limited resources at our ports of entry, Indian shipments still account for 60% of all rejected shrimp," they wrote.

They noted how "Congress was actively considering legislative proposals, such as HR 4547, The Laws Ensuring Safe Shrimp (LESS) Act, which would provide routine additional funding to the [FDA] to increase the testing of shrimp for banned veterinary drugs as well as fund further Sect. 32 purchases of US domestic shrimp by the US Department of Agriculture."

The lawmakers conclude: "It is imperative that your administration take swift action to protect American consumers. We urge you to implement a ban on the import of Indian shrimp until the situation can be further analyzed. Our shrimpers here at home can help fill the void and provide safe and healthy shrimp to the American market while we work to ensure the safety of our seafood supply."

'Stop the Great Indian Shrimp Invastion'

Graves' home state of Louisiana is a major harvester and processor of US domestic wild-caught shrimp, a competitor to Indian shrimp importers.

"Stop the Great Indian Shrimp Invasion," said the lawmaker in a press release promoting the action he and Peltola have taken.

"... We are fighting to protect free and fair trade by ensuring that foreign-farmed imports aren't given an unfair advantage while also threatening Americans' health," he continued. "Meanwhile, American shrimpers follow all the rules to keep our health and fisheries safe, and wild, healthy American shrimp are being boxed out of US markets. We need to be doing everything we can to stop bad imports from reaching consumers, especially when we have high-quality, healthy shrimp right here at home."

Peltola explained her interest in the issue, too.

"Alaska may not be a major producer of shrimp, but we rely on seafood in a similar way to communities along the Gulf of Mexico," she said in the press release. "Congressman Graves and I have spoken at length about our domestic seafood industries being hurt by a flood of imported and unhealthy seafood products – I'm proud to co-lead his letter to support American shrimpers."

Other US lawmakers have also taken action in response to the OOP investigation, as reported by [Undercurrent](#).

Senator Bill Cassidy, another Louisiana Republican, sent a short, one-page letter March 20 to the US Trade Representative and Customs and Border Protection, asking the agency to "urgently" investigate and guarantee Farinella full whistleblower protections, as reported by [Undercurrent](#).

Not to be outdone, three other prominent Democrats in the House of Representatives -- Jared Huffman, Raul Grijalva and Melanie Stansbury -- have written to Farinella, requesting he present more evidence to back up his allegations by April 2, 2024. They said in their letter that Choice Canning potentially violated five laws and policies.

The Southern Shrimp Alliance, a trade association that represents domestic harvesters and processors of wild-caught shrimp in the Southeast US, applauded the letter by Graves and Peltola in a statement released Tuesday.

"Once again, the shrimp industry is grateful to [representative Graves] for tirelessly fighting for shrimpers not only in south Louisiana but throughout the country," said John Williams, SSA's executive director. "We also greatly appreciate the support of [representative Peltola] and the recognition that all commercial fishermen, wherever they work in this country, face the same existential threats from cheap, unsafe seafood imports."

SSA on Monday (March 25) sent a 15-page letter to the Department of Labor seeking to get Indian shrimp added to two lists that identify products produced with the use of child or forced labor, as reported by [Undercurrent](#).

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