



## **H.R. 991 - Importation Permits For Polar Bear Conservation**

## **H.R. 990 - Restoration of the U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Conservation Fund Act of 2011**

### **SCI SUPPORTS H.R. 991 & H.R. 990**

**H.R. 991 & H.R. 990 – Rep. Donald Young (R-AK)**

### **CONGRESSIONAL ACTION NEEDED**

Safari Club International respectfully requests a House Natural Resources Sub-Committee hearing to be held for H.R. 991 and H.R. 990 no later than July 1, 2011.

Safari Club International requests Congressional support of H.R. 991 and H.R. 990.

Please contact Erik Elam ([Erik.Elam@mail.house.gov](mailto:Erik.Elam@mail.house.gov)) of Congressman Young's (R-AK) office to cosponsor both H.R. 991 and H.R. 990.

- **H.R. 991** will amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to authorize the Secretary to issue import permits for polar bears taken legally from approved populations prior to the importation ban imposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on May 15, 2008. These already harvested bears provide no conservation value as they sit in cold-storage in Canada. Importation of these trophies under H.R. 991, however, will generate up to \$45,000 in additional permit fees (under MMPA Section 104(c)(5)(B)) to use for conservation and research activities for the U.S. and Russian polar bear populations.
- **H.R. 990** would restore the ability of U.S. hunters to import Polar Bear trophies harvested from approved populations in Canada and with tags supplied by native Inuit communities. Restoring the importation of legally harvested Polar Bears will reinstate funding generated from import permits that have been non-existent since the listing of the polar bear on May 15, 2008. Prior to the ban in 2008, the U.S.-Russian Polar Bear Conservation Fund received approximately \$1 million for program research exclusively through import permitting fees.
- Safari Club International, along with 23 other hunting and wildlife conservation organizations, signed a letter to Chairman Doc Hastings and Ranking Member Edward Markey of the House Committee on Natural Resources communicating our strong support of H.R. 991 & H.R. 990.

**Background:** Prior to May 15, 2008, the FWS routinely granted import permits for polar bears legally harvested from six approved populations in Canada. On that date, however, then Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne, approved the listing of the Polar Bear as a threatened species. The FWS simultaneously determined that the listing of the species created a ban on the import of polar bears into the U.S. Before it became known on May 15, 2008 that the FWS would list the polar bear, U.S. hunters had harvested approximately 35-45 polar bears from approved populations. The trophies are currently being held in cold storage in Canada. Although conservation benefits are lost by preventing these imports, the FWS has determined that the law prevents it from issuing these once-routine import permits.

Since 1994, the U.S.-Russian Polar Bear Conservation Fund has received approximately \$1 million for program research through import permitting fees. Each new permit will generate \$1,000 to go into this program. In addition, prior to the imposition of the polar bear importation ban, remote Inuit communities benefitted from a massive economic boost through revenue from U.S. hunters, further encouraging the residents of these communities to value and conserve the species. Without the two bills, these benefits are lost. In addition, restoring the authority to allow future imports will not increase mortality from hunting as American hunters use tags, from a limited quota, that the native communities will otherwise use.

