

June 18, 2007

The Honorable Jim Webb  
United States Senate

1 page via fax: 804-771-8313

Dear Senator Webb:

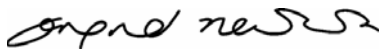
Though I'm sure it was great to spend time with your son this Father's Day, I regret that you turned a peaceful reunion during his time home from Iraq into an expedition to kill small animals. Yes, I know that fishing was once thought of as a peaceful pastime, but now that studies have shown what we probably should have seen with our own eyes—that fish feel pain, that their mouths are as sensitive as our fingers, that they communicate with one another, and that they even use tools—we know that fishing is just underwater hunting. I hope that in the future, you'll stick to peaceful pastimes, like canoeing and hiking, rather than killing animals.

As you know, violence is all around us today: in classrooms here in Virginia as well as in war zones. Although putting "We are all Hokies" bumper stickers on our cars may make us feel better, doing something to steer people away from violence actually helps. One reason our culture is so saturated with cruelty is because many people are taught from a young age that it is acceptable—or even some throwback rite of passage to manhood or a bonding ritual—to kill those who are different from us, weaker than we are, or not easily understood. Perhaps it was because my own father took me sport fishing that it took me a long time to stop rejecting what my heart, head, and eyes told me: There are better ways to amuse ourselves than by causing pain to small and defenseless living beings.

Among those who have studied fish are Dr. Culum Brown of the University of Edinburgh and Dr. Donald Broom, professor of animal welfare at the University of Cambridge, animal welfare advisor to the British government, and former chair of the EU Scientific Veterinary Committee. Dr. Brown found that fish have cognitive abilities that equal—and sometimes even surpass—those of nonhuman primates. As Dr. Broom reported: "The scientific literature is quite clear. Anatomically, physiologically, and biologically, the pain system in fish is virtually the same as in birds and mammals."

I wish your son safe passage for the rest of his service, and I hope that you and the rest of his family will receive him back safe and sound.

Very truly yours,



Ingrid E. Newkirk  
President and Founder



**PETA**

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL  
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