



**Florida House of Representatives**  
**Charlie Justice**  
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**Rep. Justice Announces Inquiry Into Shark Feeding**

St. Petersburg-Representative Charlie Justice (D-St. Petersburg) announced today that he and his staff are working with House Committee staff and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission to file legislation that will regulate or potentially ban shark feeding off the coast of Florida.

"There is a growing concern that with these shark feedings, sharks will eventually associate humans with food," said Rep. Justice, "if that concern is found to be justified, then feeding them too close to the coast is not acceptable."

The International Shark attack file reports that in 2000, there were 34 unprovoked shark attacks off of Florida coasts, the most in the nation. There are currently four tour operators in south Florida that give shark feeding tours. The actions of private individuals as well as the tour operators are part of the growing shark feeding debate. Shark feeding was a feature on the NBC show Dateline on July 24.

"My first concern is with public safety, safety for our residents and our visitors. This is too important of an issue - too important for our citizens and too important for our tourist industry for us not to take a closer look," Justice explained. He continued, "The timing is right to come to a determination on this before this industry expands."

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission is currently working with the tour industry to develop regulations and will discuss them in a September meeting. Rep. Justice intends to review the Commission's findings and then decide if legislation will be necessary.

**Committees: Education Appropriations, General Education, Tourism, Child and Family Security**

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