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HJR 34\Ver. A (34-LS1301\N)

SPONSOR STATEMENT

“Urging the United States Congress and federal fisheries managers to make changes to the federal Prohibited Species Donation program to reduce the waste of edible bycatch, increase vessel participation, and improve food security in the state.”

House Joint Resolution 34 urges Congress and federal fisheries managers to strengthen and modernize the federal Prohibited Species Donation (PSD) program so it can fully achieve its intended purpose: reducing the waste of edible bycatch and helping feed Alaska families.

The PSD program was established in the 1990s through collaboration between SeaShare, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. It allows vessels operating in federal groundfish fisheries to retain certain prohibited species caught incidentally and donate them to hunger relief organizations instead of discarding them at sea. For decades, the program has redirected millions of pounds of high-quality Alaska seafood to communities in need.

However, rising compliance costs and operational burdens have made participation increasingly difficult. Today, edible fish are often discarded, not because vessel operators lack goodwill, but because the program has become economically impractical to use. That outcome runs counter to the very purpose of the program and to Alaska’s longstanding commitment to responsible resource stewardship.

HJR 34 does not change bycatch limits, create financial incentives, or authorize the sale of prohibited species. It clearly maintains conservation standards and avoids any action that would encourage increased bycatch. Instead, it calls for targeted federal reforms that remove barriers to voluntary participation while preserving strict oversight.

At a time when many Alaska communities continue to face food insecurity, allowing usable seafood to go to waste is neither practical nor responsible. This resolution reflects a common-sense approach: protect conservation goals, support our seafood industry, and ensure that valuable resources are put to their highest and best use for the benefit of our people.