



Representative Alan Austerman

Alaska State Legislature

The Community Quota Entity (CQE) program was developed in 2004 by the federal North Pacific Fishery Management Council to help communities maintain and build involvement in the halibut and black cod longline fisheries. The CQE program provided the legal opportunity for communities to form non-profit organizations to purchase individual fishing quota (IFQ), anchoring fishery participation in these coastal communities. In response, the 23rd Legislature modified the Commercial Fishing Revolving Loan Fund to provide authorization to finance fishing quota for CQEs.

Despite the Alaska Legislature's initial efforts to provide financing to the communities, only two of 42 eligible communities have procured quota share to date. In fact, small coastal communities continue to see a significant out-migration of fisherman and quota shares, leaving them with limited or no access to fisheries occurring just off their shores.

House Bill 141 will modify the financial instruments the state has previously provided, to assist communities to participate in the program and bolster their economies. By establishing an independent revolving loan fund modeled upon the existing Commercial Fishing Revolving Loan Fund, HB 141 will enable the state to structure a successful loan program that supports rural community development and strengthens Alaska's coastal regions.

An active commercial fishing fleet in a rural community employs residents, provides tax revenues, and spends income locally, which has a substantial multiplier effect in small communities. This piece of legislation is an important tool to support rural coastal communities and develop sustainable economies throughout the state.

~ Representing Alaska State House District 36 ~

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