

**Sponsor**



**Statement**

## House Bill 117: Board of Fisheries Meeting Location

### **SPONSOR'S INTENT HOUSE BILL 117**

HB117 would require the Board of Fisheries to hold meetings in particular regions of the state when the proposals on its agenda relate to those areas.

Alaska's Board of Fisheries meets four to six times each year to consider proposals to change fisheries regulations in regions around the state. The board uses information from many sources when weighing such proposals. They are guided by counsel from the Department of Law; input from the Department of Fish & Game; and even advice from the Department of Public Safety.

Another critical source of information for the Board's deliberations is the testimony of regional stakeholders. Resident participants in a given region's commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries know best the practical ramifications of proposed changes to fisheries regulations. Often this is because such proposals can have their highest impact on the lives and livelihoods of resident regional stakeholders.

At present, the Board's record of holding meetings in areas on its agenda is inconsistent. Too often such meetings have been conducted in Anchorage, hundred of miles from the fisheries being considered.

To quote from a 2008 letter to the Board from Robert Heyano of the Ekuik Village Council on Bristol Bay, *"Our residents and communities are challenged with a cost of living that is among the highest in the state of Alaska. The expense of travel to Anchorage, the cost of hotels/food...make it impossible for most of our residents to participate in the meetings if they are held in Anchorage."*

Passage of HB117 will help ensure that the inhabitants of regional communities have the opportunity to offer face-to-face testimony to the Board. In turn, the Board will benefit from the clearest understanding of the viewpoints of those whose local economies, livelihoods, and traditions are most directly affected by its decisions.