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Sponsor Statement

CSHB 143 (FISH)

HB 143 increases the cost for a 7-day non-resident commercial crew license by applying 1/3rd of the current differential between resident and non-resident annual licenses to the short-term license. This differential, established by the Carlson v. State lawsuit allows the state to charge non-residents a limited amount more than residents for commercial fishing licenses. The Carlson equation factors in the cost of the total state fish budget, Alaska infrastructure and state population in determining the appropriate increased cost for an annual non-resident license.

This increase in license cost addresses the growing problem of multiple consecutive short-term license purchases. The 7-day license was created by the Legislature as a way for tourists to experience commercial fishing in Alaska. These short-term crew licenses (also known as dude licenses) have been successful in their original intent, but there is concern that fishing crew members who would otherwise purchase an annual license are instead purchasing numerous consecutive short-term licenses.

As a trend, this decreases license receipt revenue to the state and impacts the Fishermen's Fund (a fund administered by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to assist with the medical costs of accidents incurred during commercial fishing operations). As a group, those purchasing short-term licenses may be less experienced on a commercial vessel, and thus more likely to get injured, placing a burden on the Fishermen's Fund without helping to adequately pay for the program.