



## Alaska Trollers Association

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March 17, 2014

Representative Kurt Olson, Chairman  
House Labor and Commerce Committee  
Alaska State Legislature  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

### **RE: SB 159 an HB 300 Air Ambulance Services**

Dear Representative Olson and Committee Members:

The Alaska Trollers Association (ATA) supports SB 159 and HB 300, which seek to reinstate airlift and air ambulance membership services in Alaska.

ATA represents the Southeast troll fleet. Our members are professional hook and line salmon fishermen who work in both state and federal waters off the coast of Alaska. The troll fleet is one of the largest salmon fleets in the state and 85% of the permit holders reside in Alaska. Nearly one of every 35 people in our region works on the back deck of a trolling vessel and there is a significant support sector throughout the region that relies on them.

A large number of troll permit holders, deckhands, and processing workers live in small, rural communities that are far removed from adequate services to deal with medical emergencies requiring critical care. At upwards of \$100K, the cost of a medevac from any Alaska community is staggering to the average person and is often just the beginning of a very expensive journey through the healthcare system.

Since many insurance companies do not reimburse the entire cost of a medevac, the availability of airlift and air ambulance memberships has helped many people defray the cost of deductibles and coinsurance. During times of crisis, these services also relieve a portion of a family's paperwork burdens, by working directly with insurance companies. In the Southeast Region alone, about 6% of our population is covered by just one air lift and ambulance membership service provider. Thousands of people are affected by the state's denial of these services.

It is disappointing that the Division of Insurance chose to cancel membership service programs outright due to what looks to be more an administrative glitch than a real problem. We believe the state should find a way to allow these companies to remain in service with the necessary regulatory oversight. Eliminating these programs is a great disservice to our citizens and could put the public health at risk.

For many Alaskans, airlift and ambulance membership services play an important role in budgetary planning, in hopes of making critical healthcare accessible and more affordable. We encourage you to provide a range of opportunities to help residents get critical medical attention when needed. Airlift and air ambulance membership services are an important part of any healthcare delivery equation.

ATA requests your support for SB 159 and HB 300.

Best regards,

Dale Kelley  
Executive Director