



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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March 26, 2009.

Senator Joe Paskvan, Chair
Senate Committee on Labor and Commerce
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol (Mail Stop 3100)
Juneau AK 99801

RE: Support for SB 163 regarding Fishermen's Fund

Dear Senator Paskvan,

United Fishermen of Alaska supports SB 163 to raise the limit of payment from the Alaska Fishermen's Fund from \$2500 to \$10,000 for injury and heart attack incidents that commercial fishermen may suffer while fishing. We applaud your introduction of this legislation and ask for support from the committee.

The Fishermen's fund is self-funded by commercial fishermen and crew through fees that are included in the license price. The fund is self sustaining and this measure is not expected to change that. The \$2,500 benefit in AS 23.35.140 has not been increased since the Fund was created in 1959, and is worth just \$345 today, adjusted for inflation. This legislation will help the fund provide meaningful assistance to fishermen and crew members injured on the job, as was intended in recognition that fishermen are generally not covered by workman's compensation insurance.

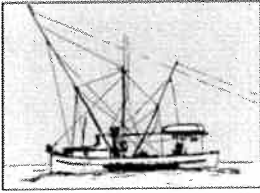
We do not support any other changes that might jeopardize the dedicated nature of the Fishermen's Fund.

Thank you for your consideration of our support of SB 163.

Mark Vinsell
Executive Director

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alaska Crab Coalition • Alaska Independent Fishermen's Marketing Association • Alaska Independent Tendermen's Association
Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association • Alaska Scallop Association • Alaska Trollers Association • Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association
Armstrong Keta • At-sea Processors Association • Bristol Bay Reserve • Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association • Cape Barnabas Inc.
Concerned Area "M" Fishermen • Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association • Cordova District Fishermen United • Crab Group of Independent Harvesters
Douglas Island Pink and Chum • Fishing Vessel Owners Association • Groundfish Forum • Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association
Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association • North Pacific Fisheries Association • Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association • Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation • Purse Seine Vessel Owner Association
Seafood Producers Cooperative • Sitka Herring Association • Southeast Alaska Fisherman's Alliance • Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association
Southeast Alaska Seiners • Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association • United Catcher Boats • United Cook Inlet Drift Association
United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters • Valdez Fisheries Development Association • Western Gulf of Alaska Fishermen



Alaska Trollers Association

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March 26, 2009

Senator Joe Paskvan, Chair
Senate Committee on Labor and Commerce
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol (Mail Stop 3100)
Juneau AK 99801

RE: SB 163 Alaska Fishermen's Fund

Dear Senator Paskvan:

Alaska Trollers Association (ATA) supports SB 163, which seeks to increase the allowable payment provided under the Alaska Fishermen's Fund from \$2,500 to \$10,000, for each covered incident of heart attack, injury, or disablement.

As you know, the Alaska Fishermen's Fund (Fishermen's Fund) is derived from assessments paid by commercial fishermen and crew through fees associated with licensing. Fishermen are not seeking additional monies from the state to provide an increased benefit, they are just asking for a more realistic payout under the fund that better reflects the real and growing costs of healthcare.

Allowable payments under the Fishermen's Fund (AS 23.35.140) have not been adjusted since the fund's inception in 1959. The current \$2,500 limit is simply too low to provide a meaningful benefit for this group of workers, who are not covered by Workman's Compensation. Furthermore, access to healthcare services and affordable insurance programs is presently out of reach for the commercial fishing industry. This makes the Fishermen's Fund even more important to those fishing families who may be faced with the steep cost of medical emergencies.

Please note that ATA does not support any additional changes at this time and wishes to maintain the dedicated nature of the Fishermen's Fund.

ATA encourages our support of SB 163. Please contact me if I can provide additional information or perspectives this or similar issues of concern to the commercial fishing industry.

Best regards,

Dale Kelley
Executive Director