

UNITED SOUTHEAST ALASKA GILLNETTERS

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March 23, 2011

Representative Alan Austerman, Majority Leader
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99802

RE: CS HB 181(Fish)

Rep. Austerman,

United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters (USAG) supports CS for House Bill 181(Fish). We believe the bill will allow for basic data collection on a segment of the fishing industry that has been difficult to ascertain. All industries in the state should be accounted for when compiling basic data for labor and workforce analysis. The information collected on crew members will help in compiling complete economic and job activity in the state, which ultimately helps in securing federal funding for important work activity programs.

In fishing industry, commercial fisheries have become rationalized, (controlled harvests and controlled participation) and the data gathered under CSHB 181 allows for crew information to finally be collected appropriately. The information will be very useful as the remaining un-rationalized fisheries become rationalized. Having complete crew information helps regulators gain a complete circle of participation, which will ultimately provide for fair distribution of resources when divvying up catch-share plans and access permits.

USAG also supports the inclusion of limited-entry permits as another form of a crew license. Many fishermen, who hold limited entry permits, often work as crew in another fishery and on another vessel. We appreciate the simplicity of HB 181. For many years, multiple options for collecting crew data have been explored; however the options always placed the impetus on the owner to provide the information. HB 181 makes the process easy and un-burdensome by simply sending the crewmembers a form to fill out and send to the department. Further simplification, might be to remove section (e), which grants the owner the option to contest the crewmember data. This removal of section (e) will cut the fiscal note and can be factored with simple statistical analysis formula.

Again, we appreciate the introduction of HB 181, and we are hopeful this bill will move quickly through the legislative process.

Best Regards,



Chris Knight, Executive Director
USAG