

PVOA SB60/HB129  
PO Box 232 Petersburg, AK 99833

**Petersburg Vessel Owner's Association**  
(907) 772-9323 email: [pvoa@gci.net](mailto:pvoa@gci.net)

April 6, 2017

Senator Coghill  
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee

Alaska State Legislature  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99811-1182  
Email: [Senator.John.Coghill@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.John.Coghill@akleg.gov)

**RE: PVOA Opposes Section 6 of SB60/HB129-An act relating to sport fishing, hunting, or trapping licenses, tags, or permits' relating to penalties for certain...relating to commercial fishing violations...**

Dear Chair Coghill and Committee Members,

Petersburg Vessel Owner's Association (PVOA) is composed of almost 100 members participating in a wide variety of species and gear type fisheries. An additional thirty businesses supportive to our industry are members. PVOA members fish throughout Alaska from Southeast to the Bering Sea. Targeted species include salmon, herring, halibut, sablefish, cod, crab, shrimp, pollock, tuna, geoduck, and sea cucumber.

**Petersburg Vessel Owner's Association is opposed to section 6 of SB60 that would double the fines for first and second convictions and raise third convictions by over 1.5 times the current fine in commercial fishing violations.** We will limit our comments to Sections 6 and 7 only of the bill, which affect our industry.

We are concerned that the goal of Section 6 of this piece of legislation is to create revenues for the State, since the fees from commercial fishing violations are paid into the general fund; unlike hunting violations from unlawfully taken game, which are paid directly to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. PVOA believes this is an inappropriate way to raise revenue.

In our opinion, when setting fines relating to commercial fishing violations, it should be done at a level that deters illegal activity. We believe the current fine schedule does just that. Currently, commercial fishing violations cost both the conviction fine, and restitution to the State in the value of any fish caught through illegal activities. The combination is often very expensive. The State also has the ability to seize a vessel that is caught fishing illegally. Commercial fishermen realize that the stakes are high, and most violations result from mistakes and are not intentional.

The Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission has a demerit point system to prevent permit holders from participating in illegal activities. When points accumulate through convictions by the Alaska Court System, permits may be suspended from one to three years.

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Furthermore, a permit holder that is suspended is not allowed to crew in the fishery, or lease their vessel for use in that fishery<sup>1</sup>.

Please remember, Section 6 applies to misdemeanors and not criminal offenses. Many of these most common commercial fishing misdemeanors, such as forgetting to sign a fish ticket before leaving a tender, are not situations where fishermen could profit from breaking the law. However, passage of Section 6 would make these small mistakes even more expensive.

PVOA believes there are already sufficient controls in place to discourage illegal commercial fishing activities and respectfully requests Section 6 be removed from the bill. Thank you for your time considering our comments and we would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Megan O'Neil  
Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> Demerit Point Information, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission,