

Alaska State Legislature

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Representative Gary Knopp

Sponsor Statement

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House Bill 203

This bill would change the language of Alaska Statute (AS) 16.10.240 to remove restrictions on the surface transport of live crab. As the law is currently written there is a restriction on the transport of crab species except for when shipped, live, via air freight after pre-packaging. House Bill 203 would change the language of AS 16.10.240 to allow for surface transport of live crab after the product has been first landed in an Alaskan port and recorded on an Alaska Department of Fish and Game fish ticket.

The current Alaska Statute pertaining to the transport of live crab was written in the 1960's and revised in 1996 due to concerns regarding loss of product as well as concerns regarding toxins when transporting by surface rather than air. Since the initial passing of this legislation, and subsequent amendments, there have been many breakthroughs in the safe transport of live crab species. These breakthroughs allow for the movement of live crab by surface transport while maintaining freshness of product. New technology allows for transport, and storage of live crab, while keeping product in cooled and aerated saltwater for its entire journey to market. Furthermore, this method of transport allows for crab to be held up to a month or longer after harvest, if necessary, without significant loss of product or risk to consumers.

As it currently stands deadloss on the shipment of live crab out of Alaska can be high due to several factors including improper packaging, delays to air shipment from weather, and a general lack of air shipment service to remote Alaskan crabbing communities. This bill will allow for high quality Alaskan crab to reach markets despite the limitations to air freight.

As live crab markets continue to expand around the globe, Alaska has fallen behind due to the limitations placed on live export from the State. Red King crab is currently sold live on global markets by industries in other countries. This includes sales to the United States and Canada as well as other prime markets who would be better served by the Alaskan crabbing industry. The ability to sell currently restricted species in a larger and more consistent volume would help to expand consumption of Alaskan crab, bring economic opportunity to Alaskan crabbing communities, and benefit the State and State industries as a whole.