

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 21

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES AUSTERMAN, Thomas, Ramras, Muñoz, Millett, Edgmon, Seaton, Peggy Wilson, Harris, Neuman, Johnson, Johansen

Introduced: 2/27/09

Referred: House Special Committee on Fisheries, Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Requesting the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to cease consideration of an**
2 **amendment package that would require a Pacific cod endorsement for a license**
3 **limitation program license holder to participate in the Pacific cod fisheries in the Gulf of**
4 **Alaska.**

5 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 **WHEREAS** the Alaska seafood industry is the largest private sector employer in the
7 state; and

8 **WHEREAS** the commercial fishing industry generates the most revenue of any
9 renewable resource industry in the state; and

10 **WHEREAS** there are more than 125 communities in Alaska that depend on
11 commercial fisheries for their economic well-being; and

12 **WHEREAS** there are numerous interior Alaska communities and regional hubs like
13 Anchorage, Juneau, and Fairbanks that indirectly depend on commercial fisheries for their
14 economic well-being; and

15 **WHEREAS** commercial fisheries provide tax revenue to the state and municipalities;

1 and

2 **WHEREAS** commercial fishing vessel owners, skippers, crewmembers, processing
3 workers, and their families are residents of Alaska; and

4 **WHEREAS** many Alaska businesses provide goods and services to the commercial
5 fishing industry and exist for the support of the industry; and

6 **WHEREAS** the fishery resource in both state waters and federal waters off of Alaska
7 is a public resource; and

8 **WHEREAS** broad participation in the harvest of this public resource by Alaskans
9 supports stronger local economies; and

10 **WHEREAS** the fishery management in 900,000 square miles of ocean off the coast of
11 Alaska is managed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council; and

12 **WHEREAS** federal fishery management programs implemented by the North Pacific
13 Fishery Management Council increasingly favor the award of limited access privileges, in the
14 form of individual transferable quotas, to individuals and corporations without requiring their
15 active participation in Alaska's commercial fisheries; and

16 **WHEREAS** these limited access privilege programs are also known as fishery
17 rationalization; and

18 **WHEREAS** these rationalized fishery management programs have led to significant
19 job losses and fishing fleet consolidation in Alaska's fisheries and coastal communities; and

20 **WHEREAS** these fishery management programs have caused significant negative
21 effects on businesses in coastal Alaska communities and regional hubs; and

22 **WHEREAS** the same fishery management programs have enabled many owners to
23 stop active participation in Alaska's commercial fisheries, while continuing to extract
24 significant income from the fisheries; and

25 **WHEREAS** federal fishery rationalization programs have been largely responsible for
26 the 35 percent decline in the number of commercial fishermen in the state since 1990; and

27 **WHEREAS**, in rationalized and consolidated fisheries, the costs of access to fishing
28 permits and individual transferable quotas have increased substantially and created significant
29 barriers to entry for new entrants in commercial fisheries; and

30 **WHEREAS**, because of these increased economic barriers, the median age of
31 Alaska's commercial fishermen has increased to 47 years of age; and

1 **WHEREAS** the fixed gear groundfish fisheries are among the last significant fisheries
2 in the Gulf of Alaska not to have been limited through a fishery rationalization program; and

3 **WHEREAS** fixed gear groundfish fisheries are typically prosecuted by small-boat
4 fishermen; and

5 **WHEREAS** Pacific cod is the most important species for fixed gear fishermen in the
6 Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries; and

7 **WHEREAS** access to these fisheries requires possession of a groundfish limited
8 license program permit; and

9 **WHEREAS** the possession of a groundfish limited license permit allows fishermen to
10 harvest all groundfish species in the Gulf of Alaska identified under federal law, including
11 Pacific cod; and

12 **WHEREAS** the North Pacific Fishery Management Council is considering placing
13 Pacific cod endorsements, a form of license restriction, on only those licenses that are
14 currently being used; and

15 **WHEREAS** placement of cod endorsements on currently active fixed gear licenses
16 would have the effect of rendering all other Gulf of Alaska fixed gear licenses valueless to
17 their owners; and

18 **WHEREAS** placement of cod endorsements on currently active fixed gear licenses
19 would preclude license holders without the endorsement from using their licenses to
20 participate in the Pacific cod fishery; and

21 **WHEREAS** elimination of currently inactive limited license program licenses or
22 placement of cod endorsements on currently active licenses would have nearly identical
23 effects, namely rendering all other limited license program licenses worthless to their owners;
24 and

25 **WHEREAS** this action would hinder fishermen from entering or reentering the
26 commercial fisheries for Pacific cod; and

27 **WHEREAS** Alaskans own an estimated 75 percent of the Central Gulf limited license
28 program permits and 65 percent of the Western Gulf limited license program permits that
29 would be affected by those actions; and

30 **WHEREAS** Governor Palin requested a halt in the progress of rationalization of the
31 groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska because of the likely negative effects on Alaskans;

1 and

2 **WHEREAS** the reduction of the number of limited license program permits or the
3 placement of cod endorsements on permits is a step toward fishery rationalization; and

4 **WHEREAS** the reduction of the number of limited license program permits by more
5 than 60 percent will consolidate the vessels in the fishery, reduce the number of participants
6 in the fishery, eliminate crew jobs, diminish the demand for shore side support goods and
7 services, increase the costs of entry to the fishery, and serve as a step toward rationalization of
8 the fishery; and

9 **WHEREAS** consolidation of vessels, reduction of participants, elimination of crew
10 jobs, decreased demand for shore side support goods and services, and the increased costs of
11 entry will cause harm to Alaska's fishery dependent communities and reduce commercial
12 fishing related revenue to these communities and other regional hubs in Alaska; and

13 **WHEREAS** the Alaska State Legislature is a voice on behalf of its constituents, the
14 citizens of the State of Alaska;

15 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports a policy of broad
16 participation in the harvest of marine resources in the Gulf of Alaska; and

17 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports the retention of
18 the current license limitation program so that Gulf of Alaska fixed gear license limitation
19 program license holders will be able to continue participation in all groundfish fisheries; and

20 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature requests the North Pacific
21 Fishery Management Council to cease consideration of an amendment package that would
22 require a Pacific cod endorsement for a license limitation program license holder to
23 participate in the Pacific cod fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska.

24 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the members of the North Pacific Fishery
25 Management Council; Robert D. Mecum, Acting Administrator, Alaska Region, National
26 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries; the Honorable Denby Lloyd,
27 Commissioner, Department of Fish and Game; and Cora Crome, Fisheries Policy Advisor,
28 Office of the Governor.