

HJR

64

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1992 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. CS HJR 64 (RES)

Revision Date: 4/10/92 Department Affected: Legislative Affairs Agency
 Title: Urging the federal government to BRU: _____
establish a national mandatory seafood Component: _____
inspection program Sponsor: Rep. George Jacko
 Requestor: House Resources COMPONENT SERIAL NO.

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

| OPERATING | FY 93 | FY 94 | FY 95 | FY 96 | FY 97 | FY 98 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| PERSONAL SERVICES | | | | | | |
| TRAVEL | | | | | | |
| CONTRACTUAL | | | | | | |
| SUPPLIES | | | | | | |
| EQUIPMENT | | | | | | |
| LAND & STRUCTURES | | | | | | |
| GRANTS, CLAIMS | | | | | | |
| MISCELLANEOUS | | | | | | |
| TOTAL OPERATING | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| CAPITAL | | | | | | |
| REVENUE | | | | | | |
| FUND SOURCE: | | | | | | |

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| GENERAL FUND | | | | | | |
| FEDERAL FUNDS | | | | | | |
| OTHER | | | | | | |
| FUND SOURCE: | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

POSITIONS:

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| FULL-TIME | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| PART-TIME | | | | | | |
| TEMPORARY | | | | | | |

Estimate of current year impact: _____

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)

Prepared By: Rep. Cliff Davidson, Chairman Phone: 465-2487
 Division: House Resources Date: April 13, 1992
 Approved by Commissioner: Rep. Cliff Davidson, Chairman
 Agency: _____ Date: April 13, 1992

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 64 (RESOURCES)**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA****SEVENTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION****BY THE HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Offered:

Referred:

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES JACKO, Larson, Leman, Ivan, G.Phillips, Foster, Moyer, Mackie, Taylor, Zawacki, R.Phillips, Lincoln**A RESOLUTION**

1 Urging the media to inform the public about the quality of fresh seafood sold in the
2 United States and urging the federal government to establish a national mandatory seafood
3 inspection program.

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

5 **WHEREAS** the seafood industry is the largest private employer in Alaska and the second largest
6 source of revenue for the State of Alaska; and

7 **WHEREAS** Alaskans deeply care about the quality of Alaska seafood products and the national
8 and international reputation of Alaska seafood products; and

9 **WHEREAS** the State of Alaska has long maintained a year-round seafood inspection program
10 to eliminate contamination and deterioration of seafood products produced in the state; and

11 **WHEREAS** the Alaska seafood inspection program is a model program for the rest of the nation;
12 and

13 **WHEREAS** the Consumers Union of the United States, Inc., has recently published an article
14 on the quality of fresh seafood based on samples collected in only two retail markets - Chicago and New
15 York - that has seriously questioned the quality and wholesomeness of fresh seafood sold in the United
16 States; and

1 **WHEREAS** the article is damaging to Alaska's seafood industry because it does not distinguish
2 between fresh or frozen salmon or pen-reared or ocean raised salmon, identify the species of salmon
3 tested, or identify the state, region, or country of origin of the salmon and other fish tested; and

4 **WHEREAS** the article found that 43 percent of the salmon tested contained unacceptable levels
5 of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's); and

6 **WHEREAS** the Food and Drug Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the
7 Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation have stated that there are no PCB problems
8 associated with Alaska salmon; and

9 **WHEREAS** Alaska has the most pristine waters in the world according the National Oceanic and
10 Atmospheric Administration, as demonstrated by water quality sampling at strategic sites across Alaska;
11 and

12 **WHEREAS** American per capita consumption of fish has increased nearly 25 percent over the
13 past decade; and

14 **WHEREAS** federal inspection programs have long existed for meat and poultry but not for
15 seafood;

16 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature encourages the media to educate and
17 inform the American public about the quality of all fresh seafood sold in the United States; and be it

18 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the Congress
19 to establish a national mandatory seafood inspection program to ensure that consumers nationwide
20 receive the highest quality seafood products possible.

21 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable George Bush, President of the United
22 States; the Honorable Dan Quayle, Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate;
23 the Honorable Robert C. Byrd, President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Thomas S.
24 Foley, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Edward R. Madigan, Secretary of
25 the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the Honorable David A. Kessler, Commissioner, Food and Drug
26 Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Rhonda H. Karpatkin, Executive
27 Director, Consumers Union of the United States, Inc.; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the
28 Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative,
29 members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 64
 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
 SEVENTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES JACKO, Larson, Leman, Ivan, G.Phillips, Foster, Moyer, Mackle, Taylor, Zawacki, R.Phillips

Introduced: 1/29/92
 Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 Relating to an article on the quality of ^{retail seafood} ~~fresh~~ salmon published in Consumer Reports
 2 magazine and to a mandatory ^{federal} seafood inspection program.

3 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

4 WHEREAS the Consumers Union of the United States, Inc., has published an article on the
 5 quality of fresh ^{seafood} salmon in its magazine, Consumer Reports; and

6 WHEREAS the article is based on ~~only two~~ samples collected in ~~five~~ ^{only two} retail markets; and

7 WHEREAS the information contained in the article is misleading and incomplete because it does
 8 not distinguish between fresh or frozen salmon, pen-reared or ocean raised salmon, identify the species
 9 of salmon tested, or identify the state, region, or country of origin of the ~~salmon~~ ^{other species} tested; and

10 WHEREAS Alaska salmon, as well as salmon from other states, are generally identified by
 11 species in retail and wholesale seafood markets in the United States; and

12 WHEREAS the article alleges that the salmon tested contained unacceptable levels of
 13 polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's); and

14 WHEREAS the allegation that salmon contain unacceptable levels of PCB's is unwarranted in
 15 regard to Alaska salmon; and

16 WHEREAS the federal Food and Drug Administration, the federal Environmental Protection

1 Agency, and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation have stated that there are no PCB
2 problems associated with Alaska salmon; and

3 **WHEREAS** the authors of the article adopted their own standards for acceptable levels of PCB's
4 that are inconsistent with standards of the federal Food and Drug Administration; and

5 **WHEREAS** federal and state officials were not given an opportunity to scientifically address
6 claims of PCB contamination before a public announcement of the article was made; and

7 **WHEREAS** Alaska has the most pristine waters in the world according to the National Oceanic
8 and Atmospheric Administration; and

9 **WHEREAS** the analysis of water quality at strategic sampling sites by the National Oceanic and
10 Atmospheric Administration has demonstrated that the fishing grounds of Alaska are located in water
11 that is free of pollutants; and

12 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation has a year-round seafood
13 inspection program that focuses on eliminating contamination and deterioration of seafood products
14 produced in Alaska and that is a model program for the rest of the nation; and

15 **WHEREAS** the Alaska seafood industry is the largest employer in Alaska; and

16 **WHEREAS** the Alaska seafood industry is the second largest source of revenue for the State of
17 Alaska;

18 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature disapproves of the practice employed by
19 the authors of the article in Consumer Reports magazine in finding that retail fresh salmon products are
20 contaminated without identifying the species of salmon studied and the point of origin of the salmon
21 studied; and be it

22 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature recommends that Consumer Reports
23 magazine consult with the federal Food and Drug Administration and the federal Environmental
24 Protection Agency before publicly releasing further reports of seafood contamination; and be it

25 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the Congress
26 to establish a national mandatory seafood inspection program.

27 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable George Bush, President of the United
28 States; the Honorable Dan Quayle, Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate;
29 the Honorable Robert C. Byrd, President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Thomas S.
30 Foley, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; Rhonda H. Karpatkin, Executive Director,
31 Consumers Union of the United States, Inc.; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank
32 Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska

1 delegation in Congress.

FISHY, FISHY

WHY DOESN'T THE U.S. INSPECT MORE FISH?

In 1967, soon after Congress put the finishing touches on the Wholesome Meat Act, Michigan Senator Phillip Hart introduced a bill that would have required the same kind of Federal inspection for seafood.

Senator Hart, along with consumer advocate Ralph Nader and representatives of organized labor, wanted to station Federal inspectors in every fish-processing plant. But the fish industry and its allies in the Congress and the Nixon Administration pressed for spot-checking rather than "continuous inspection."

"Fish needs the same kind of inspection as meat and poultry because it can carry just as many disease-causing organisms," Hart argued at the time. Although he held hearings in 1967, 1968, 1969, 1971, and 1974, no bill requiring seafood inspection ever passed. When Hart died in 1976, his push for fish inspection died too.

Fish inspection was largely a dormant issue through the 1980s. Then in 1990, the U. S. Senate and the House both passed bills requiring mandatory inspection of all fish-processing plants. Each house, however, had its own idea of how fish should be checked, and neither bill became law.

The big hang-up this time was which Federal agency should monitor the nation's fish supply. The fish processors pushed for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to get the job. But some consumer groups, including CU, preferred that the Food and Drug Administration inspect fish. The Agriculture Department's historical coziness with industries it regulates, plus its recent attempts to weaken its own regulatory authority over meat and poultry, didn't bode well for strong fish inspection.

In the meantime, the FDA has assumed the role of chief seafood cop. "We think we have an outstanding mandatory fish inspection program," says Thomas Billy, director of FDA's newly created Office of Seafood. "Under the Food Drug and Cosmetic Act, we have authority to inspect every seafood plant in the country."

Starved for money

In CU's view, the FDA's "mandatory" program falls short. The FDA has authority to inspect every seafood plant. But starved for money, it has used that authority sparingly, inspecting plants once every four years on average.

The FDA can't compel the seafood-processing plants it inspects to keep records of such things as temperatures and storage conditions, which would help the agency monitor fish safety. Nor does it inspect fishing vessels or retail fish stores, both significant problem areas in the handling of fish.

We also discovered big holes in the shellfish sanitation program, which the FDA supervises. Not only did we find clams with high levels of potentially harmful bacteria, but we also found that stores were not complying with rules for keeping identification tags, a cornerstone of shellfish regulation.

Furthermore, it's hard to have much confidence in the agency's surveillance of chemical contaminants in fish. In 1989, the FDA checked only 1604 fish samples

for contaminants. In contrast, the same year the U.S. Department of Agriculture checked 185,000 samples of meat and poultry. The FDA has monitored swordfish for methylmercury since 1970 and recently started monitoring shark as well. But its testing for PCBs in salmon is particularly inadequate. Of 143 samples the agency tested in a recent three-year period, most of the domestic samples were from the Great Lakes—an incomplete picture of the salmon Americans eat.

Slimpy fines

Local and state health departments also have a hand in monitoring the nation's fish. But a lack of money for frequent inspections and skimpy fines levied against retailers caught violating state health codes do little to deter unsanitary practices or to improve fish quality.

For their part, some supermarket chains are working with the Federal government to develop a voluntary program to check fish. The supermarkets that abide by the program's requirements can earn a seal of approval that will assure consumers that the fish has been handled properly. That seal is not yet in stores.

CU believes consumers deserve more than that. They need a strong program that addresses the microbial and chemical contamination of raw fish. Much of the inspection in place today focuses

on visible plant or store deficiencies, such as dirty walls and floors and the lack of paper towels in employee restrooms. While important, these problems have little to do with whether a fish is laced with PCBs or methylmercury or whether disease-causing bacteria are present.

Any program must also focus on quality. Americans are eating and should eat more fish because it is a healthy alternative to beef and pork. One way to improve quality is to mandate better temperature control, especially in retail stores. Not only must inspectors be more vigorous in policing the temperatures in display cases, but states should consider changing their food laws to require fish be kept at temperatures lower than those now permitted.



Real seals These seals are issued to processors and retailers by the U.S. Department of Commerce. The top one indicates that a batch of fish was inspected as a group. The Packed Under Federal Inspection mark indicates the fish was processed in a Federally approved and supervised plant. The Grade A mark indicates the fish has met certain quality standards.

Alaska Salmon Marketing Facts

- The seafood industry is the largest private employer in the state, employing more than oil and gas, tourism and mining combined. In recent years, the seafood industry payroll has exceeded \$1 billion.
- The seafood industry makes up one-sixth of our state's entire economy. In 1990, the value of the salmon harvest alone was \$550 million. This year's harvest dropped to between \$275 - \$325 million, a loss of about a quarter of a billion dollars from the state's economy.
- The industry needs to increase consumer demand, by aggressively marketing our products. ASMI has proven over the past ten years that it is successful in marketing Alaska seafood.
- The U.S. market shows promise for dramatic growth. If U.S. annual per capita consumption increased from one to one-and-a-half pounds, the gap between production and consumption will decrease significantly, and thus return value to our resource and decrease our dependence on Japan.
- ASMI is expected to do more with less money. This year, ASMI's domestic budget will shrink by \$1 million due to the decreased value of the harvest and gubernatorial vetoes. This shrinkage in revenues will make it nearly impossible for Alaska seafood to protect its current market share, let alone increase it.
- Seafood is competing with protein sources like beef, pork and chicken. Last year, the generic beef campaign spent \$28 million to protect its' market share. ASMI's domestic budget was \$4.9 million.
- Alaska cannot afford to jeopardize the \$60 million it invests annually on the management and enhancement of Alaska's fisheries by paying minimal attention to the other side of the equation-- the markets that give its' most important natural resource value.
- Alaska has accomplished 80 percent of its' salmon business plan (production) but must accomplish the final 20 percent (marketing).
- ASMI has proposed a Salmon Recovery Program designed to expand its current U.S. marketing efforts. The five year, \$10 million-a-year campaign is designed to attract more U.S. consumers. Funding for the program could come from state appropriations, raw fish tax credits, an endowment from the Exxon settlement, the redirection of salmon enhancement taxes, or a mixture of the above.
- ASMI's proposed Salmon Recovery Program will pay for itself, by increasing the state's tax base, if the fishery's value can be returned to 1990 levels. Right now, the state is losing \$10 million a year or more in raw fish tax receipts.

Study of Retail Fish Markets Finds Wide Contamination and Mislabeling

By MARIAN BURROS

In a study of the safety of food in retail fish markets in New York City and Chicago, Consumers Union has found widespread contamination and mislabeling of seafood.

The study was based on 113 samples of fish and clams that were purchased in 40 randomly selected supermarkets and specialty fish shops. The group found that 34 samples were spoiled, 50 were contaminated with fecal coliforms, and 8 of 20 samples of swordfish had more than the permissible level of mercury. What's more, one-third of the sample, taken from a number of different stores, were misidentified, usually as a more expensive variety.

The study contended that there were abuses in handling seafood all along the chain from the fishing vessel to the retail store. But it placed the largest share of the blame at the retail level.

"We clearly know we did not cover the whole waterfront," said Edward Groth, associate technical director of Consumers Union. "We think the look we took is big enough and reliable enough to say there is a problem."

Little Federal Regulation

Unlike meat and poultry, the handling of fish is largely unregulated by the Federal Government, and this report bolsters the contention of independent consumer advocacy groups like the Public Voice for Food and Health Policy that mandatory seafood inspection is necessary. But the Federal Food and Drug Administration called the findings overblown and said a case could not be made on such a small sampling in just two cities.

Nonetheless, Lee Weddig, executive vice president of the National Fisheries Institute, a trade association of marketers and processors, acknowledged that the study was "not all that bad as an indicator of the conditions in those areas."

And Richard Lord, a consultant to the Fulton Fish Market who is a recognized authority on fish, said Consumers Union's assertions were justified. "You cannot contradict the report," he said.

The study, which will appear in the February issue of Consumer Reports magazine, looked at seven species: salmon, flounder, sole, catfish, swordfish, lake whitefish and clams. The study tested the fish for bacteria to determine quality and freshness. Both Mr. Weddig and Douglas Archer, deputy director of the F.D.A.'s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, took issue with the bacterial standards used by Consumers Union. Their method "is not respected as a method for judging the quality of fish," Dr. Archer said. "You can't just set a number."

But Mr. Groth said the standards were based on advice from leading experts on microbiology. "Bacterial

standard textbooks," he said. The report said, "Fish truly begin to spoil when bacteria grow to between 1 million and 10 million colonies per gram." Almost 40 percent of the fish, fell between those levels and nearly 30 percent had bacteria counts above 10 million which the group classified as being spoiled, while 25 percent had 25 million colonies per gram. Total bacteria, while seldom hazardous, are indicative of spoilage.

The testing also looked at levels of fecal coliform. The higher the level of fecal coliforms, which can come from pollution or mishandling, the greater the likelihood that harmful organisms are present.

The report cites experts in seafood microbiology who say that a fecal coliform count of more than 10 per gram indicates some contamination and counts over 100 are cause for serious

Bacteria are usually not a health concern, but chemicals are another matter.

concern. Testing revealed more than half the 60-plus samples from New York had more than 10 fecal coliforms per gram while 25 of the total sample of 113 had counts exceeding 100 per gram and 15 had counts greater than 500. Most of the latter came from the more than 20 stores checked in the New York area.

There are no Federal standards for total bacteria or fecal coliform in fin fish, but when a level of 3.3 fecal coliforms per gram is found in shellfish, Government authorities have the right to destroy them.

A Question of Shelf Life

Time and temperature affect the freshness and quality of fish. The ideal temperature for storing fish is 30 to 32 degrees. The higher the temperature the shorter the shelf life.

Spoiled fish is unlikely to make someone sick. But high levels of bacteria in fish pose the same problem that salmonella does in poultry. Thorough cooking kills the bacteria, even the fecal coliform, just as it does the salmonella. Raw or partly cooked fish may pose a greater risk than fish that is thoroughly cooked.

"The problem is that you are getting lousy fish," said Mr. Groth. "It's an outrage but not necessarily a hazard."

Chemical contamination is different

that consumers can't do anything about," Mr. Groth said. "Fish are a major source of mercury and PCB's in the diet. That means you should know which fish they accumulate in."

Mercury and PCB's

PCB's, or polychlorinated biphenyls, which have been found to cause cancer in laboratory animals, contaminated almost 43 percent of the salmon in the study, half of the whitefish and 25 percent of the swordfish. Mercury, which affects the development of the nervous system, was found in 18 of the swordfish samples. The cleaner fish in terms of PCB's, mercury and pesticides were the sole and flounder.

The F.D.A. has set permissible levels of PCB's at 2 parts per million and most of the samples were within that level. But Consumers Union believes the level is too high for safety and should be lowered.

The F.D.A. has set a level of one part per million for mercury, and the average levels found in the swordfish were 1.14 parts per million. Consumers Union says the Federal limit should be lowered to 0.5, the level at which it was set until the late 1970's. Next month Public Voice will petition the F.D.A. to reduce the level of mercury allowed in seafood to 0.5 parts per million. Like so many risk assessments there is considerable controversy over an appropriate level: Mr. Weddig says it should be raised to 1.5 parts per million.

Consumers Union recommends that women who are pregnant or who are thinking of becoming pregnant, and children under six years of age, refrain from eating swordfish or shark and go easy on the canned tuna, which was tested in another study, because of the mercury levels. For others, consumption of these fish once a week is acceptable, the group said.

'Unwise Nutritionally'

That advice outraged Dr. Archer of the F.D.A. "The containment advisory based on 113 samples is unscientific, unfounded and unwise nutritionally," he said. But he said the agency agreed with state advisories that recommend limiting consumption of swordfish and shark to once or twice a month.

Even if shoppers are able to purchase fresh, uncontaminated fish, there is still no guarantee they will get what they pay for. About 32 of the 113 fish analyzed were as labeled; 35 were mislabeled, while it was impossible to determine if the other labels were accurate. Salmon was frequently labeled "Norwegian salmon," the study said, an excited-sounding but nonexistent species.

More national news appears on page B9.

ANTIQUARI & SL

COLONIAL • FINE PERSIAN DESIGNS • ART DECO CHINESE • TURKISH AND Bessarabian Kilims • RUSSIAN CAUCASIAN RIGS • PERSIAN





Alaska State Legislature

HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

P.O. Box V
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811
(907) 465-3715

The Honorable Ted Stevens
United States Senate
522 Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

January 27, 1992

BRYCE
JAN 27

The Honorable Frank Murkowski
United States Senate
709 Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Don Young
House of Representatives
2331 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Messrs. Stevens, Murkowski and Young,

The recent issue of Consumer Reports, attacking the quality of seafood sold in the United States, has caused considerable concern within the Alaska fishing industry. The industry already faces difficult marketing challenges in a changing competitive environment.

The Consumer Reports article also illustrates the vulnerability of our seafood marketing programs to outside forces. Even with its flawed methodology and lack of specificity, the report's impact on Alaska cannot be underestimated.

The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute has recently developed a new U.S. promotion of Alaska salmon in order to meet increasing market challenges. However, without specific labeling of salmon products as to species, state of origin and identification as to whether wild or pen reared, such marketing will be less than 100% effective and focused. We fully expect that wild Alaska salmon will be a premium product, marketed and sold to reflect its freshness and purity. Proper labeling represents a key component of that effort.

We respectfully request that you consider introducing federal legislation requiring the labeling of seafood products as to whether wild or pen reared, species, and country or state of origin. Such a law would provide consumers with greater information and clearer choices in the market place. It would also reward those states that maintain strict quality control programs, such as Alaska, and ensure that the benefits of our promotional efforts accrue to Alaska.

The problem of seafood labeling is a national problem and a federal issue. With your assistance we can make Alaska seafood the premium choice among consumers.

Ben Grussendorf
Representative Ben Grussendorf
Speaker of the House

Dick Eliason
Senator Dick Eliason
President of the Senate

Al Adams
Senator Al Adams

Larry Baker
Representative Larry Baker

Ramona Barnes
Representative Ramona Barnes

Mark Boyer
Representative Mark Boyer

Kay Brown
Representative Kay Brown

Betty Bruckman
Representative Betty Bruckman

Pat Carney
Representative Pat Carney

Dave Choquette
Representative Dave Choquette

Virginia Collins
Senator Virginia Collins

Sam Cotten
Senator Sam Cotten

Shirley Craft
Senator Shirley Craft

Cliff Davidson
Representative Cliff Davidson

Bettye Davis
Representative Bettye Davis

Cheri Davis
Representative Cheri Davis

Dave Donley
Representative Dave Donley

Jim Duncan
Senator Jim Duncan

Johnny Ellis
Representative Johnny Ellis

David Finkestein
Representative David Finkestein

Paul Fischer
Senator Paul Fischer

Steve Frank
Senator Steve Frank

Max Gruenberg
Representative Max Gruenberg

Mark Hanley
Representative Mark Hanley

Bill Hudson
Representative Bill Hudson

George Jacko
Representative George Jacko

Jay Kerttula
Senator Jay Kerttula

Gene Kubina
Representative Gene Kubina

Loren Lemah
Representative Loren Lemah

Jerry Mackie
Representative Jerry Mackie

Richard Foster
Representative Richard Foster

John C. Gonzales
Representative John Gonzales

Rick Halford
Senator Rick Halford

Lyman Hoffman
Senator Lyman Hoffman

Ivan Ivan
Representative Ivan Ivan

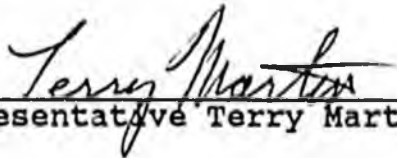
Lloyd Jones
Senator Lloyd Jones

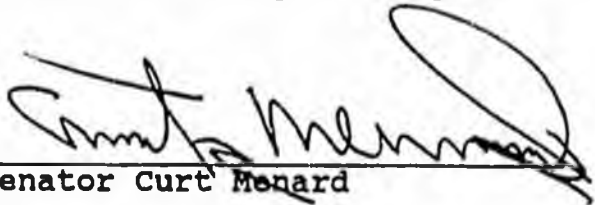
Niilo Koronen
Representative Niilo Koronen

Ron Larson
Representative Ron Larson

Georgiaanna Lincoln
Representative Georgiaanna Lincoln

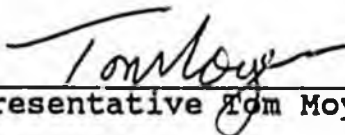
Eileen MacLean
Representative Eileen MacLean


Representative Terry Martin


Senator Curt Menard

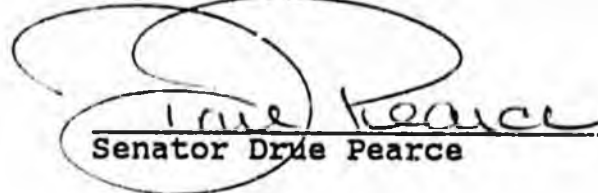

Representative Mary Miller

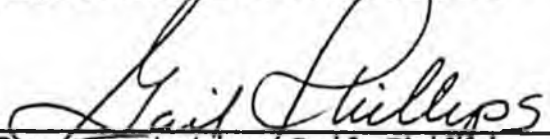

Representative Mike Miller


Representative Tom Moyer

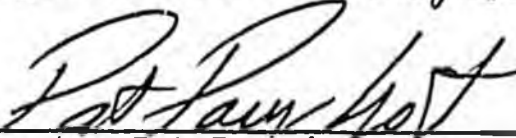

Representative Mike Navarre

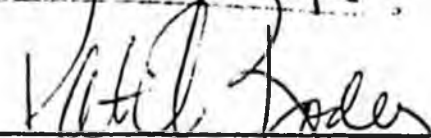

Representative Pat Parnell



Senator Druce Pearce

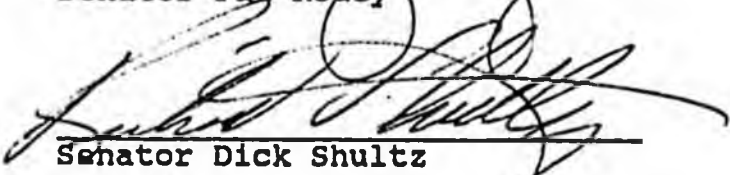

Representative Gail Phillips

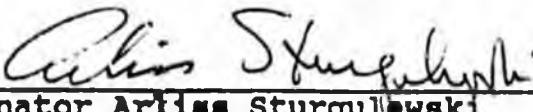

Representative Randy Phillips

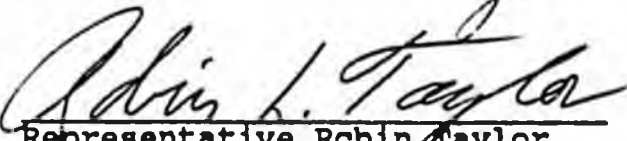

Senator Pat Pourchot


Senator Pat Rodey


Representative Bert Sharp

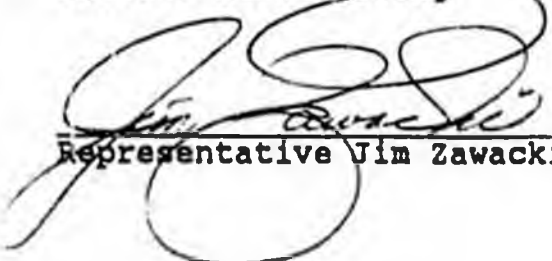

Senator Dick Shultz

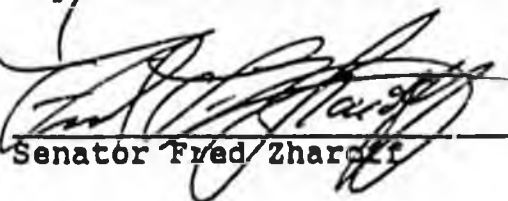

Senator Arliss Sturgulowski


Representative Robin Taylor


Senator Rick Uehling


Representative Fran Ulmer


Representative Jim Zawacki


Senator Fred Zharoff

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BEATING UP ON SALMON

Another blow

HERE WE GO again. On Feb. 27, The Los Angeles Times published a story on seafood that threatened to further taint the image of Alaska's salmon, albeit indirectly.

But the story was wrong, according to the FDA. The reporter incorrectly linked data from one FDA survey of plant sanitation and manufacturing to another more recent survey of seafood samples. The reporter applied statistics from one survey to reach conclusions on the other survey.

Then the story went out over the wire nationwide.

The California newspaper asserted that the FDA's survey of seafood processing facilities showed that "as many as 20 percent" of the samples analyzed "showed evidence of microbiological contamination, decomposition and filth."

Within a day, the FDA said the Los Angeles Times statement "was in error."

IF ONLY WE could philosophically shrug our shoulders and say, "bad reporting — it happens." But we can't, not when it comes to one of Alaska's most important industries.

It's a replay of the bad press salmon got when Consumer Reports published a sweeping indictment of seafood in its February issue.

Incidents like these do not help Alaskans struggling to promote seafood in general, and salmon in particular, to a larger Outside market.

But it looks like it's not going to stop. The National Fisheries Institute has alerted the industry that continued assaults on seafood safety are in the works.

A small group called Public Voice for Food and Health Policy reportedly is planning more attacks over the next few months using the media. In March look for a challenge to the FDA and Centers for Disease Control statistics on seafood-related illness. In April, expect a release of "victims' case studies." And in May, another challenge to the FDA when it releases its major diet study.

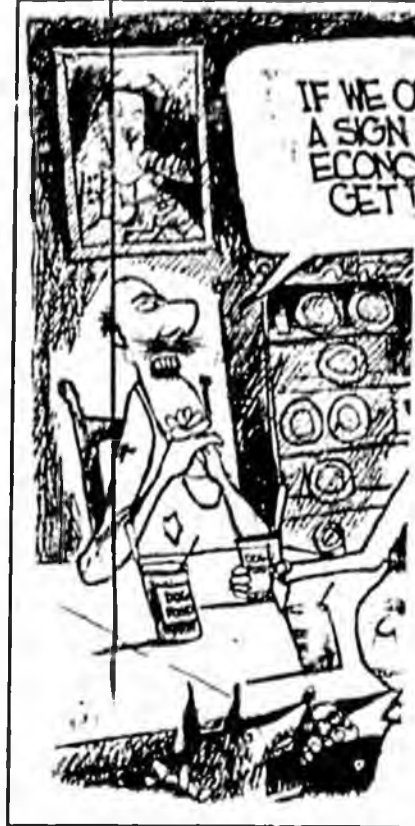
THE SEAFOOD industry makes up one-sixth of the state's economy, according to Kim Elton, executive director of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute. Mr. Elton spoke to a Resource Development Council meeting in Anchorage following the Los Angeles story.

Fish are the second-largest revenue generator in the state, and Alaska's annual harvest represents approximately 56 percent of all seafood landings in the United States.

Alaska seafood gets lumped in with Lower 48 problems at the very time it is striving to tempt more palates. World production of salmon exceeds 2 billion pounds annually, with world consumption at about 1.8 billion pounds — thus the glut on the market.

What's needed is a strong coalition between fishermen, the industry and the state to mount an effective communications campaign about Alaska's seafood. At the same time, there needs to be a stronger federal seafood inspection program — one that works in cooperation with the state Department of Environmental Conservation — to assure consumers they're getting a wholesome product. The FDA currently has a program, but its resources are primarily aimed at imports. It needs to turn its attention to domestic seafood as well.

A strong inspection program combined with effective public information will convince consumers that Alaska seafood, in particular salmon — as we can testify — is safe.



Check overdra

CHICAGO — The House bank scandal is one of those stories that seemingly requires no explanation. Everybody can understand penalty-free check-bouncing. That's what makes it so damning — and so easily distorted.

What's known at this point strongly suggests that dozens of members of Congress have taken advantage of the laxness of operations at their checking-and-deposit service to float themselves large, interest-free loans. It's also clear that scores of others are facing embarrassment — if not worse — for sloppiness no more sinister than the kind of checkbook-balancing errors most of us often make.

The primary contests and November election will tell us how shrewd the voters are in separating the sheep from the goats in this mess. Meantime, commentators are using the scandal as a metaphor for everything they dislike about Congress.

Like the \$640-toilet seat which came to symbolize Pentagon waste, the check-bouncing story seems certain to become a shorthand symbol of a Congress that is relentlessly undisciplined in far larger fiscal matters.

The situation is both better and worse than it's being made to appear. As scandals go, this one is penny ante. There was no damage to national security, no breach of the Constitution and no significant loss to the taxpayers. Yet it is both plain and futile for members of Congress to insist that this was "a private matter" that involved no misuse of public funds and therefore should be of no concern to their constituents.

The bank was in the Capitol building, which both symbolically and legally belongs to the nation and all its citizens. The clown who ran it were on the federal payroll, supported by our taxes.

Moreover, the operation which Speaker Thomas S. Foley finally and belatedly shut down last year was not an anomaly. If it did not reflect the institutional corruption Minority Whip Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., alleges, it

* Regarding Senator Stevens
legislation introduced this week

CONSUMER SEAFOOD SAFETY ACT

The bill calls for a comprehensive national seafood safety program under the direction of the Secretary of Health and Human Services and in cooperation with the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Agriculture and the states. As under current law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, through the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), would be in charge of the program, maintaining the FDA's existing public health authority over the safety of both domestic and imported seafood. The Secretary of Commerce, through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), would regulate harvesting areas and conduct routine inspections of domestic processors. The Secretary of Agriculture, through the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), would inspect processors overseas, as well as imports at the port of entry. State governments would continue to have primary responsibility for shellfish programs and regulating state waters.

Elements of the program would include:

1. **Shellfish safety.** FDA would administer a comprehensive federal-state shellfish safety program based on the existing National Shellfish Sanitation Program. Each shellfish-producing state would be expected to develop and implement a Federally approved program for classifying and monitoring shellfish growing waters, testing shellfish, and certifying shellfish shippers. Shellfish imports would be permitted only from nations with FDA-certified programs.
2. **Federal tolerances and standards.** FDA would be required to establish and implement tolerances for maximum allowable levels of chemical and biological contaminants in seafood. In addition, the bill would authorize standards for processing and handling seafood based on the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) approach.
3. **National inspection system.** FDA and NOAA jointly would develop a domestic seafood inspection system to minimize public health hazards and enforce Federal seafood standards. NOAA would conduct inspections at a frequency required by the gravity of potential problems associated with each seafood commodity and the processor's history of compliance. The bill would require all processing facilities to participate and register with FDA. "Whistleblower" protection would be provided for employees who identify potential seafood safety problems.
4. **Imported fish products.** FDA and FSIS jointly would develop a program to ensure the safety of imported seafood.

Seafood importers would be required to register and would be held to the same requirements as domestic producers. FDA would be responsible for evaluating foreign programs and developing inspection agreements with other nations. FSIS would conduct inspections overseas and at the port of entry.

5. Monitoring of growing and harvesting areas. NOAA would establish a monitoring program to identify the growing and harvesting locations in which contaminated fish are likely to be caught. In addition, NOAA would have authority to close federal waters, while states would close their harvesting waters pursuant to Federal guidelines.

6. State inspection and monitoring programs. The bill recognizes that federal-state cooperation is necessary to implement an effective national program and provides for technical and financial assistance to states to strengthen their programs. Inspection authority would be delegated to states that meet national requirements, and grants of up to 60 percent of the cost of operating the program would be provided by the federal government. Similar grants would be available to states with approved shellfish programs.

7. Public information and consumer education systems. The bill would set up: (a) a system to assess seafood safety problems through surveillance by the Centers for Disease Control and sampling by FSIS; (b) a national education program under FDA, Sea Grant, cooperative extension services and the states; and (c) a seafood advisory system for consumers and fishermen under FDA, NOAA, the states and the Environmental Protection Agency.

8. Research. The bill requires FDA and NOAA to develop a comprehensive research plan to address seafood safety questions. In addition, it calls for an intensive research effort to improve monitoring programs for seafood contamination caused by biotoxins and algal blooms.

9. Authorization of appropriations. The bill provides for an initial appropriation of \$60 million in FY 1993, and an increase to \$70 million in FY 1994. These appropriations would cover the expected cost of the shellfish program, standard setting, monitoring of harvesting and growing areas, the Federal share of approved state programs, and research and education costs.