



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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March 8, 2016

Honorable Dan Sullivan
United States Senate
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Don Young
U.S. House of Representatives
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
709 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for S.2529 and H.R. 4617 for U.S. caught fish in school lunch programs

Dear Senators Sullivan and Murkowski, and Congressman Young,

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the statewide commercial fishing trade association representing 34 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state and offshore Federal waters. We are writing today to thank you for introducing and to offer our support for S. 2529 and H.R. 4617, which would amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to require that the Buy American purchase requirement for the school lunch program include fish harvested within United States waters, or caught by US-flagged vessels in the case of tuna caught on the high seas.

Most direct USDA purchases have this requirement, but programs that allow for discretionary spending with US funds or are simply supported with US funds in an indirect manner do not have such a requirement.

The recently released *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020* encourage Americans to follow a lifetime of healthy eating in order to prevent chronic diseases like obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and Type 2 diabetes. Part of that recommendation is that Americans eat at least 8 ounces, or two servings, of seafood per week. According to the Seafood Nutrition Partnership¹ only 1 in 10 Americans follow this guideline. In order to reverse this trend, common sense dictates that we should start children off eating seafood at a young age so they develop healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime. We feel the National School Lunch program is the ideal vehicle to accomplish this objective.

¹ <http://www.seafoodnutrition.org/blog/2015-dietary-guidelines-for-americans-announced>

However, under current law there is no guarantee that seafood served in school lunches was caught by U.S. fishermen or processed according to the health and safety standards the domestic industry is subject to. As the law stands now, seafood caught by foreign fishermen in foreign waters, then processed and frozen in foreign countries, then shipped to the US for secondary processing, could end up in school lunches. In recent years there have been countless instances of seafood fraud, mislabeling, and evidence of illegal fishing associated with imported seafood. The level of uncertainty with respect to seafood imports is just too great to risk with our children.

Passage of S. 2529 and H.R. 4617 will ensure that school lunches serve fish sustainably harvested in US waters by American fishermen and processed according to the health and safety standards that we have come to expect. It will support healthy lifestyle choices for the next generation of Americans. It will provide a nutritious, cost-effective source of protein to schools that are already having to do more with less. And it will support the domestic fishing and fish processing industry, thus making a positive contribution to the US economy and the health of the oceans. As such, we once again offer our support and encourage the immediate passage of S. 2529 and H.R. 4617.

Should any opportunity arise to improve the bill, we suggest inclusion of other U.S. seafood such as crab, shellfish and shrimp as well as U.S. caught fish, and to include any and all US government supported programs that foreign imports may find their way into such as WIC, Prisons and likely more.

Thank you in advance for your consideration in this manner.

Sincerely,



Jerry McCune
President



Mark Vinsel
Executive Administrator

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers • Alaska Independent Fishermen's Marketing Association
Alaska Independent Tendermen's Association • Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association • Alaska Scallop Association • Alaska Trollers Association
Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association • Armstrong Keta • At-sea Processors Association • Bristol Bay Reserve • Cape Barnabas Inc.
Concerned Area "M" Fishermen • Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association • Cordova District Fishermen United • Douglas Island Pink and Chum
Freezer Longline Coalition • Golden King Crab Coalition • Groundfish Forum • Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association
Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association • North Pacific Fisheries Association • Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association • Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation • Purse Seine Vessel Owner Association
Seafood Producers Cooperative • Southeast Alaska Herring Conservation Alliance • Southeast Alaska Fisherman's Alliance
Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association • Southeast Alaska Seiners • Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association
United Cook Inlet Drift Association • United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters • Valdez Fisheries Development Association