



# UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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March 2, 2017

Representative Andy Josephson, Co-Chair  
Representative Geran Tarr, Co-Chair  
House Resources Committee  
Alaska State Legislature  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

## **RE: Support for CSHB 87 regarding Board of Fisheries Conflict of Interest**

Dear Co-Chairman Josephson and Tarr, and Committee Members,

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 34 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state, and the federal fisheries off Alaska's coast.

UFA supports CSHB 87 to address Board of Fisheries conflict of interest.

We support the bill's changes to the definition of family members to be considered in potential conflicts of interest. In current practice, a conflict of interest is considered as an economic or financial conflict on the basis of commercial fishing permit ownership in the extended family including brothers, parents, children, aunts, uncles, grandparent, and spouse's parent and siblings, regardless of any financial linkage, or dependency on the board member<sup>1</sup>.

The far reaching extension to family members outside of any real financial conflict of interest is unreasonable and unnecessary, and has been unfairly used to effectively reduce the Board from the intended seven members to six or less. The resulting imbalance of board actions affects the commercial sector most often since other sectors are rarely found to have a conflict of interest.

According to sec. 16.05.221, Board of Fisheries members are appointed by the Governor "**on the basis of interest in public affairs, good judgement, knowledge, and ability in the field of action of the board, and with a view to providing diversity of interest and points of view in the membership.**" The current practice is preventing valuable input from board members in many cases of extended family with commercial fishing involvement where no real conflict of interest exists. In addition, members deemed to have a conflict are even required to remove themselves

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<sup>1</sup> Background Information on the Alaska Board of Fisheries Conflict of Interest Disclosures, February 5, 2009, Document submitted for HB 41 in 2009 Legislature:

[http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_documents.asp?session=26&docid=5022](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_documents.asp?session=26&docid=5022) )

from the seat at the board table; in fact the board process is stopped until the board member is in the public section of the room. This eliminates the input from board members that often have the most experience and knowledge of the topic, which is counterproductive and contrary to the basis for the member's service to the board.

UFA supports refining the conflict to family members for whom there is real conflict of interest, and urges passage of CSHB 87.

Sincerely,



Jerry McCune  
President



Mark Vinsel  
Executive Administrator