



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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Tarr, Coastal Legislators Secure Seafood Marketing Program in Economic Development Bill *Program will Create Opportunity to Allow Industry to Expand in Size, Grow in Value*

BOSTON – On July 31, the Massachusetts legislature enacted H.4377, An Act promoting economic growth across the Commonwealth, which seeks to both stimulate the economy and incentivize job creation. Contained within the bill is a seafood marketing program first offered by Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester) in a bill filed on December 17, 2013 and co-sponsored by Representative James Cantwell (D-Marshfield), Senator Mark Montigny (D-New Bedford), Representative George Peterson (R-Grafton), Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante (D-Gloucester) and many other coastal legislators.

With the groundfish industry struggling to remain viable due to increasingly crushing federal regulations, the seafood marketing program will bring a unique opportunity for the state to partner with the industry to increase the value of local catches and promote the viability of the businesses that bring them to market.

“The people that depend on our commercial fisheries are fighting every day for survival against monumental challenges, and our state needs to play an active role in promoting the value and consumption of their harvest,” said Senator Tarr. “With our fishing industry facing serious challenges to its survival, we need to do everything possible to maximize the value of its catch. This program will create a powerful partnership between the state and the industry to educate and motivate consumers about the value of Massachusetts seafood, and its diversity and sustainability. By doing so, it can make a difference in keeping the commercial fishing industry alive in our state and strengthening it for the future.”

“The economic significance of this legislation is underscored by the number of people who are employed in our Massachusetts seafood industry,” added Representative Cantwell, Co-Chair with Senator Tarr of the Legislative Coastal Caucus. “In 2012, Massachusetts had some 624 fishing boats up and down the Commonwealth’s coast; that’s 624 small businesses striving to succeed, feeding our communities, and employing over 3,000 people as crew members. From there, the economic activity increases immensely as fish is processed in plants and sent to wholesalers, which account for more than 5,000 additional employees. After that, through retail and food-service sales, including restaurants and markets big and small, commercial fishing has a hand in either creating or supporting the need for another roughly 20,000 employees.”

Continued Cantwell, “A properly organized seafood marketing program will both promote the health benefits of eating seafood and brand our Massachusetts harvested products, so Massachusetts Fresh Seafood will be as recognized and sought after as Florida Oranges, Vermont Maple Syrup, Georgia Peaches, and Napa Valley Wine.”

The program draws from the recommendations of a report authored by the Special Commission on Seafood Marketing. Tarr, who served on the commission with Senator Montigny and Representatives Cantwell and Peterson, worked closely with the commission members and other legislators to bring the program to fruition. The goals of the seafood marketing program include:

- Increasing the public’s knowledge about the health benefits of eating seafood and the economic importance of the Commonwealth’s fishing industry;
- Educating the public on fisheries resources, management and commercial fishing to build consumer confidence;
- Creating name recognition and increasing consumer demand and preference for Commonwealth seafood products;
- Stabilizing market prices through the promotion of the Commonwealth seafood products in low consumer demand or when the supply of said products is high;
- Developing a variety of promotional and educational tools and strategies to achieve the program’s purpose and objectives; and
- Identifying a range of sources and mechanisms to fund program activities and to increase the scope of program outreach to the public and other stakeholders.

“Undoubtedly, Massachusetts has its own valued brand of some of the nation’s freshest seafood. We must now capitalize on our brand and market it nationally and globally to earn the highest value for our seafood. This Commission and this plan is one step toward that goal,” said Representative Ferrante.

“The marketing of local seafood will help provide an economic stimulus to an industry that has been decimated by illogical and unfair federal fishing regulations that have crippled our fishing fleet. Promotion of locally caught seafood is critically important to the sustainability of an industry that employs thousands of residents and generations of New Bedford families,” said Senator Montigny.

The Seafood Marketing Program also creates a permanent steering committee to assist the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) in the administration of the program. The committee will include representatives of wholesale seafood dealers, seafood retail businesses, seafood restaurant businesses, fishing industry advocacy organizations, and the commercial fishing/harvesting industry, including representatives of the lobster, scallop and wild caught shellfish industries.

In addition, the measure also establishes the Massachusetts Seafood Marketing Program Fund to be administered by the DMF. This fund will be used to help provide ongoing financial support for the administration of the Massachusetts Seafood Marketing Program.

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