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DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

January 28, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to express my extraordinary frustration with the lack of responsiveness the Commonwealth has experienced with the U.S. Department of Commerce and its agencies on the challenges facing our fishing families in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts fishing industry is a vital part of our history and economy, employing approximately 80,000 people in fisheries and related shore side businesses and generating \$4.4 billion in sales. Gloucester is America's oldest seaport and, since 2000, New Bedford has been the number one port for landings value in the United States.

But our fishing communities face severe challenges, and are currently suffering great hardship, as a result of well intended but often ill-conceived and poorly executed efforts by federal regulators to constrain the fishing harvest and rebuild our fish stocks. Over the last decade, the Northeast groundfish fleet has been reduced by nearly 60 percent, and this decline shows no sign of ending. The small fisherman is in danger of disappearing altogether, and with him would go a way of life.

In the face of these challenges, however, we have found the Department of Commerce, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the National Marine Fisheries Service unwilling to partner with us to find creative solutions that can balance the need for a vibrant fishing community with maintaining a sustainable fishery.

We have worked hard to offer solutions and have been repeatedly rebuffed. We were denied the modest funding required for a collaborative groundfish stock assessment to resolve disagreements over the state of our fisheries resource. We were denied a request to raise catch limits within the Department's own conservation limits. We were denied economic assistance to help small fishermen hurt by the poorly planned transition to the new "catch shares" regulatory system. We were denied a simple request to allow for 45 days the consideration of new cases submitted by fishermen who believe they were mistreated by an enforcement system found by the Department's own Inspector General to be out of control.

Government's role as a regulator of our vital fisheries resources depends on fundamental trust between regulators and fishermen. Commerce's intransigence and disrespect toward the working men and women who harvest our seafood, and their representatives in elected office, imperils that fundamental relationship.

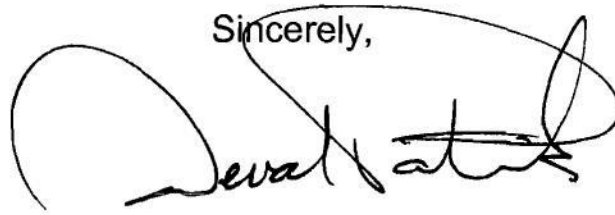
The fishing families of Massachusetts deserve better.

I ask respectfully that you intervene to set your Department of Commerce and its agencies on a course of cooperation and consideration with regard to the fishing industry in Massachusetts and the coastal communities that depend on it for sustenance and identity.

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Thank you for your personal attention to this matter, which is of such great importance to Massachusetts fisherman and their families, and for your leadership on all the issues that face this great nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deval Patrick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a distinct end stroke.

cc: Gary Locke, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce
Jane Lubchenco, Administrator, NOAA
Eric Schwaab, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries
Pat Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries – NERO
Senator John Kerry
Senator Scott Brown
Representative Barney Frank
Representative William Keating
Representative John Tierney
Rick Sullivan, MA Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Mary Griffin, MA Commissioner of Department of Fish and Game
Paul Diodati, MA Director of Marine Fisheries