

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the United States House of Representatives
Office of the Speaker
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner,

I have the honor of serving as the Minority Leader of the Massachusetts State Senate, and also of representing the port of Gloucester, Massachusetts, one of our nation's most historic, productive and enduring fishing ports. These roles have led me to reach out to you, as one of our nation's leading Republicans, to express my deep concern for actions being taken with regard to New England's commercial fishing industry, and to seek your assistance on behalf of our fishing families and our communities.

Throughout my tenure in the legislature, I have worked to support those who fish from the ports of Massachusetts and our neighboring states. I have been honored to stand with them as they have sought to continue one of the oldest industries in our country, and I have come to know and respect them.

These are individuals, families and small businesses who dedicate themselves each day to providing an unsurpassed protein resource, in the form of fish, to the people of our nation. They work hard, face incredibly harsh weather conditions, and risk their lives and safety so that others may benefit from access to our precious fish stocks that are managed for exactly that purpose.

Yet today, these people who are prime examples of the values and efforts that have built America, are facing the grim possibility that their livelihood will be extinguished as a result of the failure of the fisheries management of our federal government. This is a dire situation that may well culminate in the extinction of one of our country's most historic and iconic industries at the hands of a government that cannot seem to find the will or the initiative to come effectively to its defense.

I am reminded of the reality of this situation nearly every day when I look at Gloucester's harbor and others. Our offshore fleet has been decimated. Active inshore permits have

decreased significantly (25-30%) over just the past few years. Shoreside businesses are threatened because less fish is allowed to be landed and fewer vessels need essential goods and services such as ice, fuel, gear and repairs.

Now, because of recent stock assessments and the perceived inflexibility of the laws which you and your colleagues and predecessors have passed, the New England fishing fleet could be subjected to as much as a 70% reduction in allowable catches of species such as cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder.

The current situation and the threat to the survival of the fishing industry have been officially recognized by the declaration of a Northeast fishery disaster on September 13, 2012 by Acting U.S. Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank. Clearly these families and small businesses are in need of assistance, and they are as equally entitled to it as General Motors, Bank of America, American International Group (AIG), and other employers that our federal government deemed worthy of being spared from collapse and failure.

Fortunately, a legislative vehicle is available to provide this needed and deserved assistance in the form of H.R. 152 Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, 2013. The Senate recognized the compelling need to take action to support fishing families and included \$150 million which the Senate approved on a bi-partisan basis at the end of the 112th Congress.

Following the end of the 112th Congress and the failure of the Senate bill to pass, House Republicans appear to be dismantling aid for fishing families by initially not providing any aid and now under an amendment proposed by Representative Jon Runyan of New Jersey, limiting aid to only \$5 million in aid only for state fisheries that were directly impacted by Hurricane Sandy would be eligible. Additionally, on a party line vote, the House Republicans on the Rules Committee voted down bi-partisan amendments filed by Congressmen Tierney (D-MA), Markey (D-MA), and Keating (D-MA), respectfully, which could have restored up to \$150 million in fisheries disaster funding from coming to the House floor for a vote. In doing so they have begun to extinguish our hope for survival.

I am deeply discouraged by efforts to eliminate the availability or reduce the amount of this aid, and even more concerned that House Republicans would seek to reduce assistance to hard-working fishing families while providing \$471 million in increased spending to NOAA, the governmental bureaucracy that is overseeing their extinction. This is an intolerable situation that cannot be allowed to continue.

I truly appreciate your leadership in Congress, and your service to our nation, and I firmly believe that you value highly the hard-working Americans who go to work each day to support their families and make our country stronger and more prosperous.

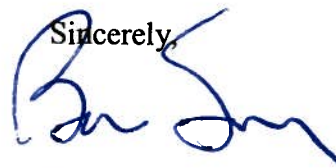
Thus, I am writing first and foremost to seek your immediate assistance in securing appropriate levels of emergency assistance for our fishing families and the businesses dependent on them, and I pledge to work with you in any way possible to reach that goal.

In the same vein, I would like to invite you to visit Gloucester and other New England ports to witness personally what is at stake if we fail to act to support the commercial fishing

industry at this critical time. My staff and I will undertake whatever actions are necessary to facilitate such a visit.

Finally, if such a visit is not possible, I request to discuss this matter with you in Washington D.C.

I truly appreciate your consideration of this situation, my views on this matter, and my requests contained herein. Thank you once again, and I look forward to working with you in this regard.

Sincerely,


Bruce Tarr
State Senator
Minority Leader

Cc: Honorable Senator John F. Kerry
Honorable Senator Elizabeth Warren
Honorable Representative John Tierney
Honorable Representative William Keating
Honorable Representative Edward Markey
Honorable Governor Deval Patrick
Honorable Senate President Therese Murray
Honorable Speaker Robert DeLeo