



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

SENATE MINORITY LEADER

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

SENATOR BRUCE E. TARR
1ST ESSEX AND MIDDLESEX
ROOM 308
(617) 722-1600

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, January 15, 2013

**CONTACT: Troy Wall or
Michael Smith**
Senator Tarr's office
617-722-1600
troy.wall@masenate.gov
michael.smith@masenate.gov

Tarr Urges Speaker Boehner to Support Fishing Industry with Disaster Relief Money *Expresses Disappointment in the Blockage of Lifeline Amendments*

BOSTON – Responding to the need of emergency relief money to the fishing industry, today Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester) sent a letter to Speaker of the United States House of Representatives John Boehner urging him to support any measure that would provide increased aid for the industry. Unfortunately, amendments to H.R. 152, the *Disaster Relief Appropriations Act*, that were filed by Massachusetts Congressmen Tierney, Markey, and Keating, and would raise the level of assistance to the industry to as much as \$150 million, were voted down by the House Rules Committee yesterday.

In the letter to Speaker Boehner, Tarr cites the fishing industry as being in “a dire situation that may well culminate in the extinction of one 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 to its defense.”

With a possible 70% reduction in allowable catches of fish species such as cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder, and the steady decline of active inshore fishing permits in Gloucester totaling approximately 25-30% in just the past few years, the fishing industry is facing irrevocable damage. Not only is the offshore fleet struggling to stay afloat, but so are shoreside businesses that provide essential goods and services to the industry. These businesses not only assist the fishing industry, but also help drive the local economy. Unfortunately, they too are ensnared in the same net that has decimated hard working fishing ports along the Northeast coast. The amendments would have provided a much needed lifeline to save one of the oldest professions of this country.

On September 13, 2012, Acting U.S. Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank declared the Northeast fishery as an official disaster. “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,” Tarr wrote. “I am deeply discouraged by efforts to not include 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 the government bureaucracy that is overseeing their extinction.”

To conclude the letter, Tarr invited Speaker Boehner 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.”

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(A copy of the letter is attached.)