



For Immediate Release
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Crabbers Applaud Bipartisan Effort to Combat Illegal Fishing

The Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers (ABSC) applaud the Obama Administration and members of Congress from both sides of the aisle for their bipartisan effort to combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU), or “pirate” fishing. Late last week President Obama signed into law H.R. 774, the “*Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act*.”

Originally introduced in the House by Representatives Bordallo (D-GU) and Young (R-AK) and championed in the Senate by Senators Murkowski (R-AK), Sullivan (R-AK), and Schatz (D-HI), this vital legislation will help “level the playing field” for America’s commercial fishermen who often face stiff market competition with illegally harvested seafood products. This legislation complements other ongoing efforts to prevent illegal seafood from entering US ports.

The legislation also allows the US to continue its leadership on the issue of pirate fishing at the international level through formal ratification and implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement. The Agreement is the first global instrument specifically designed to address the issue and calls upon signatory nations to effectively police their ports and prevent illegally harvested seafood products from entering into commerce.

These efforts are particularly relevant for crabbers and coastal communities in Alaska. For nearly two decades the Alaskan crab industry has been the “poster child” of what can happen to law-abiding fishermen when their markets are flooded with illegal product. According to a 2013 *Wall Street Journal* article, Administration officials estimate that illegal Russian crab has cost Alaskan crabbers \$560 million since 2000. This translates to millions of dollars in lost tax revenue to Alaskan coastal communities.

While crab poaching in Russia has declined over the past few years, recent comments by the Russian Association of Crab Catchers indicate the very high likelihood that poaching will resume on a larger scale in the coming year as a result of reduced legal quotas in the Russian Far East. As such, passage of this legislation is particularly timely and welcomed by Alaskan crabbers.

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers (ABSC) represents approximately 70% of the crab fishermen in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands king and Tanner crab fisheries. ABSC is involved in regulatory issues, scientific research, marketing, and advocating for the safety of life at sea for Alaska’s crab fishermen.