



Official Business

# Alaska State Legislature

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## Sponsor Statement

**HB283: "An Act relating to appointments to the Board of Fisheries and to the ex officio secretary of the Board of Fisheries."**

Despite record catches in recent years, the present salmon industry is reeling from the impact of foreign farmed-fisheries driving Alaska's prices to historic lows. As early as 1892, the Alaska salmon industry has been plagued by glutted world salmon markets and falling prices – *but has always recovered and it can recover again*. However, to compete in the world market today, it is imperative that we utilize leading edge expertise in the management of our salmon industry.

To bring this expertise to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, (ABOF) this bill effectively does two things: it designates three seats to the commercial fishing sector, three seats to the sport/personal-use sector, and one seat to the subsistence users throughout the state; and, it limits the terms of the board members while allowing reappointment after sitting out one term.

**Section 1 - Seat Designation:** Under the first item, it is important to note that the designation of board seats is not a unique proposal in regard to appointing membership to boards. As an example, the International Pacific Halibut Commission has designated seats, with one member from each country representing harvesters, one representing processors, and one representing the government. The designation mentioned above would assure representation from all segments of industry pertinent to the biological management of the fishery.

**Commercial representation is lacking with the present appointment procedure:** The 2001 APOC report shows that the combined commercial fishing income from the seven current ABOF members was less than \$1,000 in 1990. This amount hardly constitutes adequate representation of a billion-dollar/year industry, the state's leading employer, the second largest contributor of revenue to the general fund, and most importantly, an industry in desperate need of revitalization. With the entry of high quality, lower-priced foreign-farmed fish on the world-market, Alaska needs innovative, knowledgeable, and progressive individuals from the commercial fishing sector to ensure that our fisheries can hold their own against such challengers.

**Knowledgeable sport and personal-use representation is necessary to address several critical issues:**

Riverbank degradation, international salmon treaties reflecting migration patterns and harvest levels, and local area stock depletion of federally managed fisheries all are concerns related to Alaska sport and personal use fisheries.

Additionally, sport and personal-use fisheries throughout the state are burgeoning. To effectively manage the river systems for sustained yield and imminent growth, knowledgeable representation needs to be a part of the process.

**A dedicated subsistence seat needs to be added to the ABOF:**

The lack of settlement between the state of Alaska and the federal government on the subsistence issues has led to co-management of our resources between the two entities. The ABOF in its management would bode well to have representation from the subsistence users of this state. Alaskans need to adequately address commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence all within the context of each other.

**Section 2 - Term Limits:**

While good argument exists against term limits regarding elected officials, appointed officials fall into a somewhat different category. The people of the state have a voice through the governor, who appoints the board members, and the legislature, which confirms them. However, there is no direct vote as in a general election to remove members. This bill compromises the concept of limiting members' terms by allowing reappointment after sitting out one term.