

ASSOCIATED FISHERIES OF MAINE

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February 20, 2007

Representative Anne Haskell
31 Higgins Street
Portland, ME 04101

Dear Representative Haskell:

On behalf of our membership, I write to thank you for sponsoring LD170 "*An Act To Permit the Landing of Lobsters Harvested by Methods other than Conventional Traps*".

Due to strict groundfish conservation measures, fisheries scientists predict that in the next 20 years, New England groundfish landings will triple to as much as 300 million pounds annually.

This valuable economic growth opportunity is being lost to other New England states, in large part because the groundfish industry faces an unfriendly business climate in Maine.

Maine's groundfish boats are relocating to Massachusetts because Massachusetts offers several advantages that translate to as much as 20% in additional revenue and cost savings.

The most significant incentive for groundfish boats to divert their groundfish landings to Massachusetts is the ability to legally land lobster bycatch.

While our "boats float" to Massachusetts, Maine's processors are forced to buy fish, that would otherwise be landed in Maine, from Massachusetts and then truck that fish back to Maine in order to provide jobs, and healthy seafood to consumers, in-state grocery stores and restaurants.. Other necessary support business have either recently closed (fishing gear supplier) or are facing serious losses in jobs and revenue (fuel/ice dealers, shore engineers, net makers, Portland Fish Exchange, etc.).

The groundfish industry makes a unique cultural and economic contribution to the state of Maine.

LD170 will level the economic playing field between Maine and Massachusetts, and will help the groundfish industry preserve the infrastructure that is critical to retain valuable jobs today and to secure and develop economic growth for the future.

As members of Maine's fishing community we would not ask your support of LD170 if this legislation would harm the lobster resource, lobstermen, or lobster fishing families. The existing prohibition on landing lobster bycatch has no scientific conservation basis.

Your support is greatly appreciated and we look forward to working with you to assure the passage of LD170.

Sincerely,
Maggie Raymond

Associated Fisheries of Maine is a trade association of fishing and fishing dependent businesses. Membership includes harvesters, processors, fuel/gear/ice dealers, marine insurers and lenders, and other public and private individuals and businesses with an interest in commercial fishing.