

# Knowles' testimony stressed jobs, resource protection

Stressing jobs, local economies, and protection of the resource, Governor Tony Knowles testified recently before a Senate Subcommittee on reauthorization of the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act.

"The seafood industry is the largest private employer in Alaska," said Knowles, who served on the North Pacific Council from 1988 until 1990. "The industry provides more than 77,000 seasonal jobs and an annual payroll of approximately \$600 million. If Alaska were a separate nation, our annual seafood harvest would rank among the top ten in the world."

Knowles voiced both support and criticism of different aspects of the Act. He gave strong support for the Community Development Quota program, which sets aside a small portion of the Bering Sea pollock harvest for economic de-

velopment programs for coastal communities in western Alaska.

"This innovative program had made a big difference in communities which have some of the highest unemployment rates and lowest per-capita earnings in the country," Knowles said. "For the first time, these communities have a chance to develop a stable, long term economy by participating in a fishery that takes place right at their doorstep."

Knowles was critical of the council's decision to adopt an individual Fishery Quota (IFQ) program which allocates halibut and sablefish catches based on an individual's past participation in the fishery.

"I did not support IFQ programs when I served on the council and I still have serious concerns about the effect of such a program on our coastal communities and our resident small boat

fleet," Knowles said. "Before any IFQ program is developed in the future, the act must address major public policy issues, including excessive ownership of quota share, windfall profits, foreign control, impacts on coastal communities and parity between on-shore and offshore segments of the industry."

Knowles said he supported language in the bill that would set aside a portion of the annual harvest for entry level fishery or small boat fisherman who so not have quota shares. Knowles also said he supported an IFQ lien registry to allow financing for Alaska fisherman.

Knowles asked the subcommittee to close the loophole in the law that allowed a scallop vessel to fish in waters that had been closed by the state. "We cannot stand by and let the nation's fisheries be wantonly pillaged by un-

scrupulous operators," Knowles told the subcommittee.

Knowles also called for adoption of tougher standards to reduce the bycatch of non target species of fish, and so-called "economic discards" - fish discarded because they are the wrong size or of low quality.

"Under my Administration, the State of Alaska will not condone the waste of fish," Knowles said. "The state has often been frustrated by interpretation of the Magnuson Act which emphasize harvest efficiency and economic return over conservation."

In written testimony, Knowles discussed provisions to clarify conflict of interest standards, defended Alaska's voting majority on the North Pacific Council, and voiced support for strengthening habitat protection in the Act. Knowles pledged to work with the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans

and Fisheries during the reauthorization process and thanked them for holding their hearing in Anchorage.

"The Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act is one of the nation's most important pieces of fisheries legislation," Knowles said. "By holding this hearing in Alaska, you are sending a strong signal about the importance of the views of Alaskans regarding the management of our fisheries."

The Magnuson Act was adopted in 1976 to protect American fish stocks and fisherman from being devastated by foreign distant water fleets. The act extended federal jurisdiction to 200 miles offshore and created eight regional fishery councils, including the North Pacific Fishery and Management Council, which regulates fishing in federal waters off Alaska.