

North Pacific fishery panel vote changes put on hold

WASHINGTON, D.C. — An amendment which would have dramatically altered the structure of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council was withdrawn from committee last week as members agreed to discuss the issue further, according to Congressman Don Young, R-Alaska.

The amendment, introduced by Reps. John Miller, R-Wash., and Jolene Unsoeld, D-Wash., would have amended the Magnuson Act by giving Washington two more seats and Oregon one more seat on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Currently, Alaska has seven seats, Washington, three, and Oregon, one.

During a hearing of the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee last week, Young argued against the amendment.

"The council chairman is a resident of Seattle," Young noted, "and fishermen from Outside of Alaska catch 75 to 85 percent of the fish in the 200-mile zone off Alaska.

"No one can point to a single decision by the North Pacific Council that deliberately discriminates against Washington or Oregon. In fact, the law prohibits such discrimination."

Young urged committee members to avoid changing the structure of the council, but to join together to make the council system work.