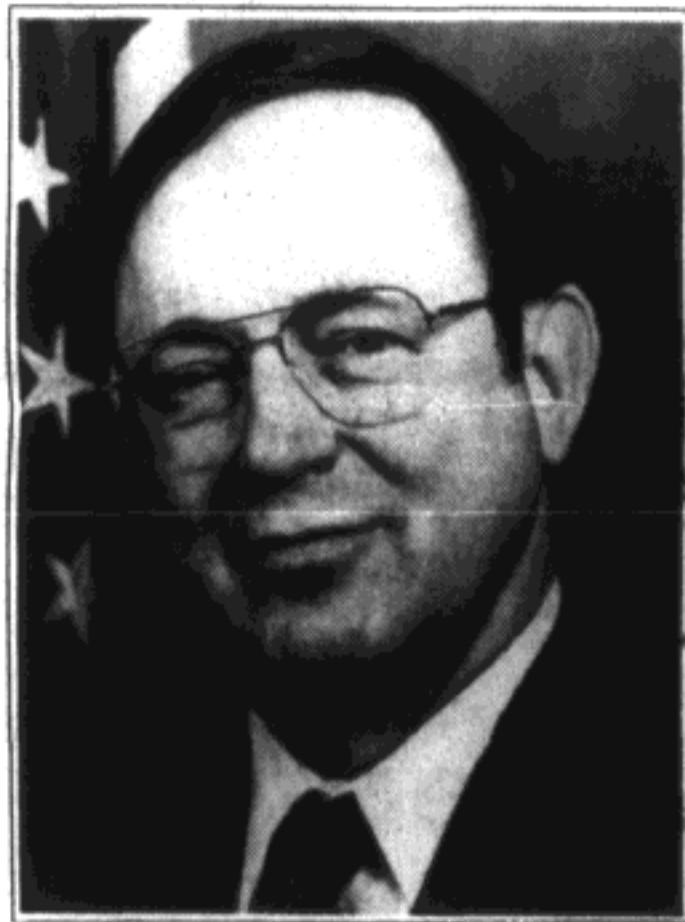


Proposed change to fisheries council anti-Alaskan



by Rep. Don Young
for the Tundra Times

Since 1976, when the Magnuson

Fishery Conservation and Management Act was approved, Alaska fishermen have held a majority of seats on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

As a sponsor of this landmark legislation, I worked for the Alaska majority on the council, as did Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, and the late Warren Magnuson, whom the bill was named after.

Now, however, our majority is being challenged by the Seattle-based trawlers and congressmen from Washington and Oregon.

In September, during the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation markup reauthorization of the act, an amendment was offered to give Washington two more seats and Oregon one additional on the council.

Currently, Alaska has six seats, Washington three and Oregon one

seat. There is one member who is a representative of the federal government.

The proposed amendment would have given the Washington and Oregon fishermen a seven to six majority over Alaska.

I strongly oppose the amendment, which I consider unnecessary and anti-Alaskan.

The arguments made by the members from Washington were interesting, but they ignored the facts. In addition, a majority of their constituents disagree with them.

Washington and Oregon are not under represented in the council system; in fact, they have voting membership in two different councils.

Neither of these states are treated unfairly by the North Pacific council. Let me cite a few examples:

- The council chairman is a resident

of Seattle.

- Fishermen from Outside catch 75 percent to 85 percent of the fish in the 200 mile zone off Alaska.

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

We have already bent over backwards to be fair. The problem is not who has how many seats on which council, but whether we have good people on the councils and whether the councils and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association will carry out the law.

The committee vote on this issue will be extremely close — perhaps one vote either way. This is an extremely important issue and I will keep you informed as we take further action.