

Panel fights reflagging of foreign vessels

In the interest of protecting U.S. shore-based processors, U.S. floating processors and many coastal communities — especially those in Alaska that are economically dependent on these operations — the Pacific Fisheries Legislative Task Force passed a strongly worded resolution directing Congress to prevent reflagging of foreign vessels.

Representing Alaska were Rep. Adelheid Herrmann, D-District 26, and Rep. John Sund, D-Ketchikan. Specifically, the resolution calls upon Congress to pass legislation that prevents reflagging and ensures that all seamen and fish processing workers on U.S. processing vessels are U.S. citizens.

The Pacific Fisheries Legislative

Task Force is a group of legislators from the Pacific Northwest states who have joined together to take action on issues of common concerns.

The resolution asks Congress to make any reflagging legislation effective retroactively to Jan. 1, 1987. This is perhaps one of the most important provisions, because many foreign companies submitted reflagging applications in anticipation of Congress taking some kind of action, according to Herrmann.

"Congress must ensure a retroactive date of Jan. 1, 1987, or they should be held responsible for foreign takeover of U.S. fisheries through the reflagging mechanism.

"Reflagging legislation with these

provisions is necessary to ensure that our people benefit from our fisheries resources," Herrmann said. "Communities throughout District 26 such as Sant Point, Unalaska and Akutan rely on fish processing industries. Allowing reflagging to continue is to rob these communities of the benefits they derive from shore-based processing facilities."

Herrmann as co-chairman of the House Resources Committee is also cooperating with other legislators to let Congressman Don Young know of the importance of the Jan. 1, 1987, retroactive date. In his summer

newsletter, Young announced his commitment to a date of July 20, 1987. According to Herrmann, this date is not enough to protect the interests of coastal Alaska.

In a separate action on reflagging earlier this year Herrmann supported a resolution passed by the Alaska Legislature that calls on Congress to recognize the importance of the reflagging issues.

Herrmann said she will continue to follow this issue until she is assured that the economic well-being of coastal communities has been adequately protected.