

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

SESSION

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SENATOR BERT K. STEDMAN

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 268

“An Act relating to the membership of the Board of Fisheries”

Senate Bill 268 proposes changes to the selection process for members of the board of fisheries. Currently, the board is composed of seven members appointed by the governor. The members serve staggered three year terms so each governor has the opportunity to appoint multiple members of the board. A governor who serves two terms can appoint everyone on the board. The problem with this system of appointments is obvious. Depending on the governor’s political affiliations, the board of fisheries can be stacked with people who support a certain political agenda. Too many people on the board who advocate in favor of one fishery over another is bad for the resource regardless of whether you are a commercial fisherman, a sport fisherman or a subsistence fisherman.

Board members must be truly impartial. Each year, board decisions affect thousands of lives and hundreds of millions of dollars worth of commerce. Alaska’s Constitution mandates our state’s natural resources be managed for a sustainable yield to benefit all Alaskans. To achieve this goal, state law grants the board of fisheries wide authority to open or close fisheries and implement management plans. Alaska’s fisheries are world renowned and we need to keep politics out of management decisions; and nominate a diverse group of qualified individuals to the board.

Senate Bill 268 seeks to create a more balanced board of fisheries by requiring the membership to consist of: three members from the commercial fishing industry; three members from the sport fishing industry; and one member representing subsistence fishermen. This will go a long way to ensure that those in control of our fishery.

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