

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 7, 2014

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
H-309 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fattah:

As you work to craft the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) title within the FY2014 Omnibus Appropriations bill, we are writing to strongly urge the inclusion of fisheries disaster assistance.

Repeatedly, our offices have united with Members from coast to coast in a bipartisan effort to secure urgent financial relief for fishing communities from Alaska, to Mississippi, and New England. Pursuant to Section 315 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Management Act and Section 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, Congress is authorized to appropriate necessary funds for fishery disaster relief. The Northeast Multispecies groundfish fishery received this declaration from the U.S. Department of Commerce in September 2012, along with the Alaska Chinook salmon fisheries, Mississippi Oyster and Blue Crab fisheries, the oyster fishery in western Florida, and the fisheries impacted by the destruction of Superstorm Sandy.

As you may know, the fiscal year 2014 CJS appropriations bill reported in the Senate Appropriations Committee includes a recommendation of \$150 million above the FY2013 enacted level to alleviate the economic impacts associated with commercial fishery failures, fishery resource disasters, and State and Federal regulations, as declared by the Secretary of Commerce. Further, the language recognizes the repeated attempts to secure fishery assistance and directs the Secretary of Commerce to consult with the affected entities and provide the Committee with a spending plan for the allocation of this funding.

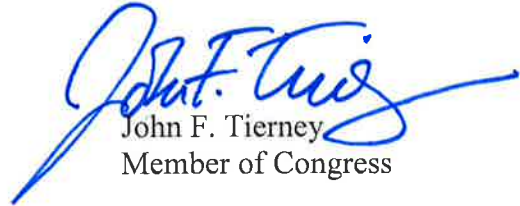
To date, the House of Representatives has failed to appropriate this emergency funding. It remains imperative that Congress act to provide emergency funding immediately. Further, as an example of the bipartisan and bicameral nature of this effort, we have enclosed a letter sent to House, Senate, and Appropriations leadership in November urging for the inclusion of fisheries disaster assistance in a final funding package for FY2014. The true impact of fisheries disasters on coastal communities remains incalculable.

Respectfully, we urge you to include the Senate-passed language for fisheries disaster assistance in final appropriations for Fiscal Year 2014. We thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and look forward to working with you on behalf of this historic industry.

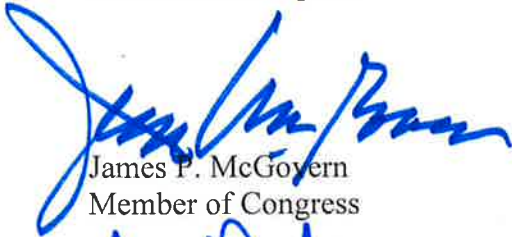
Sincerely,



William R. Keating
Member of Congress




John F. Tierney
Member of Congress



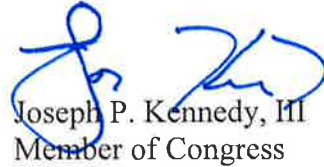
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress



Katherine Clark
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

*Cc: The Honorable Paul Ryan, Chairman, House Budget Committee
The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairman, Senate Budget Committee*

Enc: Letter of November 13, 2013 to House and Senate and Appropriations Committee Leadership

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 13, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
S-221, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
S-230, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Speaker
H-232, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
H-204, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Appropriations Committee
S-128, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Appropriations Committee
S-128, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
H-305, United States Capitol
Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner, Leaders Reid, McConnell, and Pelosi, Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Rogers, Vice Chairman Shelby, and Ranking Member Lowey:

We write to urge you to include fisheries disaster relief in any final funding package for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014.

Since 2012, the Department of Commerce declared a number of fishery failures in the United States. Regrettably funding has not been appropriated yet to deal with the effects of these disasters, which continue to affect communities in our states and districts. Indeed, while the Senate Appropriations Committee has included \$150 million for fishery failures in the FY 2014 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill, funds have not been enacted into law to address the full spectrum of disaster needs.

As you know, under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management and Interjurisdictional Fisheries Acts, the Secretary of Commerce must determine that a commercial fishery failure has occurred before funding can be provided to assist the affected fishery. The Secretary, after careful review, declared the following disasters in the areas we represent:

- Alaska Chinook – On September 12, 2012, a federal fisheries disaster was declared for Alaska Chinook salmon fisheries in the Yukon River, Kuskokwim River and Cook Inlet. Thousands of Alaskans have been affected including commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishermen. Beyond direct impacts, communities have experienced reduced work for processor employees, reduced tax revenues, and reduced income for fishery dependent businesses.
- Mississippi Oyster and Blue Crab – On September 12, 2012, a federal fisheries disaster was declared for commercial oyster and blue crab fisheries in Mississippi. Historic flooding of the lower Mississippi River required opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway on May 9, 2011. This action released substantial amounts of freshwater into the Mississippi Sound, impacting the entire ecosystem. Mississippi's oyster and blue crab fisheries were extensively damaged, resulting in severe economic hardship for commercial fishermen still recovering from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill.
- Northeast Multispecies Groundfish Fishery – On September 13, 2012, a federal fisheries disaster was declared for Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York. Despite fishermen's strict adherence to federal management practices, reductions in the total allowable catch for certain critical groundfish stocks are having a significant impact on coastal communities, fishing families, and local economies, leaving many historic fishing communities on the brink of extinction.
- Superstorm Sandy fisheries impacts – On November 16, 2012, a federal fisheries disaster was declared for New Jersey and New York due to the damage caused by Superstorm Sandy. The effects of the storm have created severe economic losses for both commercial and recreational fishermen.
- Florida Oysters – On August 12, 2013, a federal fisheries disaster was declared for the oyster fishery along the west coast of Florida. The fishery resource disaster resulted from excessive drought conditions in Apalachicola Bay and elsewhere in the Florida panhandle during the 2012 – 2013 winter fishing season.

For the communities they affect, fisheries disasters are as devastating as other federally-declared disasters. Therefore, we request your assistance in ensuring that the \$150 million fisheries disaster mitigation funding included in the Senate-version of the CJS appropriations bill is included in any final FY 2014 funding package. These funds could be used in a variety of ways to provide fishermen vital help including support for emergency financial assistance, operational costs where necessary, economic development programs, and science initiatives to manage the fishery in a timely way that gives confidence to all stakeholders.

Thank you for your attention and your support for improving conditions for fishermen throughout the country. We remain committed to preserving and promoting our fishing industry. We look forward to continuing to work with you to effectively address the challenges facing this critical industry.

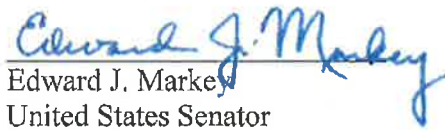
Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator




Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Thad Cochran
United States Senator




Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Susan Collins
United States Senator



Mark Begich
United States Senator




Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



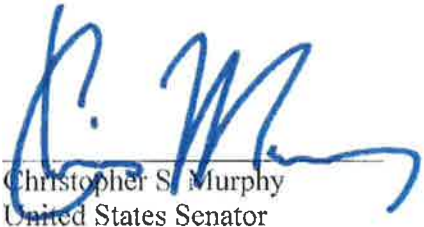
Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



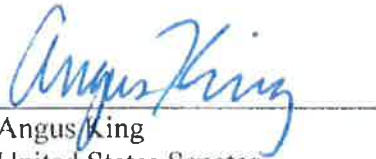
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



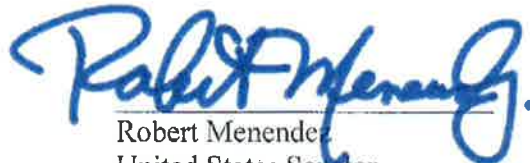
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



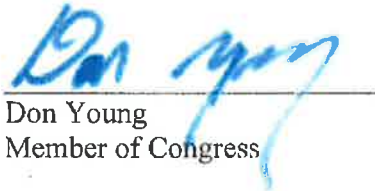
Angus King
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



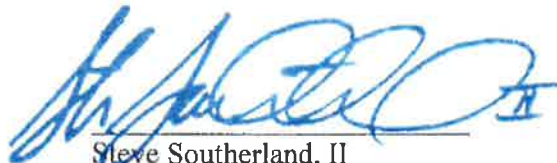
Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



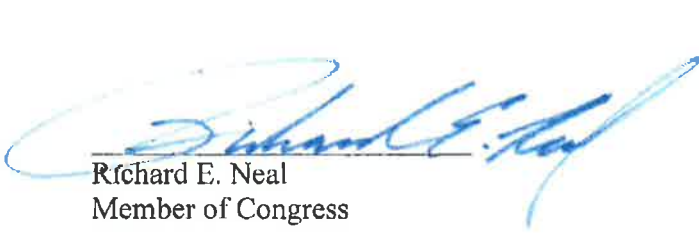
Don Young
Member of Congress



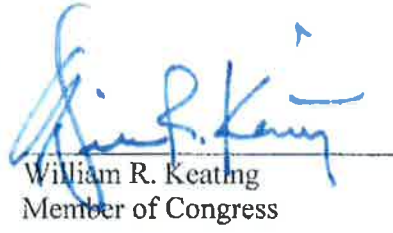
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



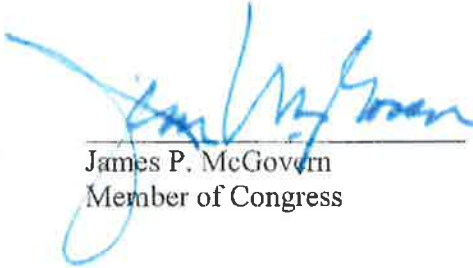
Steve Southerland, II
Member of Congress




Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



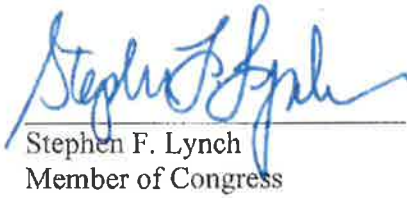
John F. Tierney
Member of Congress



James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



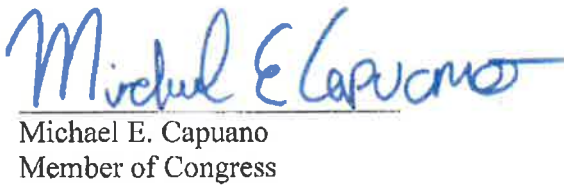
Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress



Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



Michael H. Michaud
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



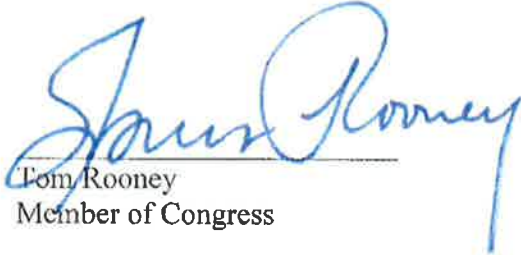
Joseph P. Kennedy III
Member of Congress



Timothy H. Bishop
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Tom Rooney
Member of Congress