January 26, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We are writing to request expeditious action on the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute’s request on behalf of the Alaska seafood industry to purchase Alaska seafood through the USDA Section 32 program. We appreciate what USDA has done to improve seafood consumption in its Food and Nutrition Service program and we urge the USDA to continue Section 32 purchases of Alaska seafood through 2024. These purchases are invaluable in supporting our fishermen, processors, and coastal communities while they attempt to navigate through very unfavorable global market conditions.

Russian sourced fish which are reprocessed in China have flooded the US markets at low prices. While the recent U.S. Executive Order 14068 is intended to close this door, it does not change the fact that seafood processors have been and are forced to sell into the depressed market to further avoid expensive holding costs. This is having an adverse ripple effect back to our fishermen, processors, and fishing communities and is causing constriction of the overall industry.

USDA programs supported by Section 32 funds were designed to provide food-insecure Americans with access to a nutritious diet and to stabilize prices through surplus food distribution. We therefore join a previous request from our Alaska congressional delegation that you proceed with purchases of Alaska seafood, particularly salmon, for Section 32 purchase requests through 2024.

These purchases are badly needed to help stabilize market conditions and decrease inventories prior to the 2024 season. **Timing is critical as seafood processors will soon be attempting to obtain financing for the 2024 pack.** USDA purchases are critical in helping to support market prices which are the linchpin of the entire U.S. seafood supply chain. Your purchases not only benefit American consumers but our seafood industry which provides more direct jobs than any other industry in our State.

While following through on U.S. seafood purchase commitments as soon as possible is the most direct and timely way to support the Alaska seafood industry during these challenging times, we also seek your support for additional measures at USDA that could serve to support the seafood industry.
Seafood is currently not integrated into many USDA policies or programs designed to ensure domestic food security, supply chain integrity, and support for U.S. harvesting and processing businesses, at the same level as terrestrial sources of protein. To the greatest extent possible, we request your leadership in integrating U.S. seafood production into national food policy strategies and all USDA programs designed to support America’s food production.

Thank you for considering continued and expeditious Section 32 purchases of Alaska seafood through 2024.

Sincerely,

Senator Gary Stevens
President
District C

Senator Cathy Giessel
Majority Leader
District E

Senator Bill Wielechowski
Rules Chair
District K

Senator Bert Stedman
District A

Senator Löki Tobin
District I

Senator Scott Kawasaki
District P

Senator Jesse Kiehl
District B

Senator Forrest Dunbar
District J

Senator Robert Myers
District Q

Senator Jesse Bjorkman
District D

Senator Kelly Merrick
District L

Senator Click Bishop
District R

Senator James Kaufman
District F

Senator Shelley Hughes
District M

Senator Lyman Hoffman
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Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
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Speaker Rep. Cathy Tilton
District 26 – Wasilla

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District 12 – Anchorage

Rep. Dan Ortiz
District 1 – Ketchikan

Rep. Sara Hannan
District 4 – Juneau

Rep. Alyse Galvin
District 14 – Anchorage

Rep. Cliff Groh
District 18 – Anchorage

Senator David Wilson
District N

Senator Mike Shower
District O

Rules Chair Rep. Craig Johnson
District 10 – Anchorage

Rep. Louise Stutes
District 5 – Kodiak

Rep. Rebecca Himschoot
District 2 – Sitka

Rep. Laddie Shaw
District 9 – Anchorage

Rep. Jennie Armstrong
District 16 - Anchorage

Rep. Genevieve Mina
District 19 – Anchorage

Senator Donny Olson
District T

Senator David Wilson
District N

Senator Donny Olson
District T

Rep. Andi Story
District 3 - Juneau

Rep. Andy Josephson
District 13 – Anchorage

Rep. Zack Fields
District 17 – Anchorage

Rep. Andrew Gray
District 20 – Anchorage
Rep. Donna Mears  
District 21 – Anchorage

Rep. Stanley Wright  
District 22 – Anchorage

Rep. Kevin McCabe  
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Rep. Maxine Dibert  
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Rep. Mike Prax  
District 33 - North Pole

Rep. Ashley Carrick  
District 35 - Fairbanks

Rep. Bryce Edgmon  
District 37 - Dillingham

Rep. Neal Foster  
District 39 - Nome

Rep. DeLena Johnson  
District 25 - Palmer

Rep. Sarah Vance  
District 6 - Homer

CC:  
U.S. Representative Mary Peltola  
U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski  
U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan  
Governor of Alaska Michael Dunleavy