

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 29, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Kerry and Secretary Pritzker:

As your Presidential Task Force on Combatting Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing and Seafood Fraud develops recommendations to address illegal fishing and seafood fraud, we write to express our strong support for creating a national seafood traceability scheme that helps ensure that all seafood sold in the United States comes from legal sources and can be tracked back to those sources. The complex nature of our seafood supply system can allow fraudulent seafood and illegal fish to enter the U.S. seafood market. Together, illegal fishing and seafood fraud harm consumers, fishermen and businesses, and our oceans.

We ask that you develop a comprehensive framework that encourages interagency coordination, raises catch documentation requirements for all seafood to the level required for our domestic fishermen, ensures that information stays with the seafood for traceability purposes, increases transparency in the supply chain, provides consumers with more information about the seafood they purchase, and utilizes agencies' existing authorities to provide effective enforcement measures. These solutions will help ensure that all seafood sold in the United States is safe and legally caught and that consumers will have the information they need to make informed purchases.

Seafood fraud, including species substitution and other kinds of mislabeling, can disguise a fish's origins, making it easier for illegally-caught fish to enter the U.S. market. A recent report found that, of wild-caught seafood imports in the U.S., between 20 and 32 percent originated from illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which is threatening the health of fisheries around the world. IUU fishing is estimated to account for twenty percent of all fisheries across the globe, leading to losses ranging from \$10 billion to \$23 billion every year. As the second largest seafood importer in the world, the United States has both an opportunity and a responsibility to deter this illegal fishing by closing markets to these products.

We appreciate President Obama's commitment to combatting illegal fishing and seafood fraud, and now we need your leadership to see his vision realized. The Task Force should use the federal government's existing authorities to create a comprehensive solution that will help keep

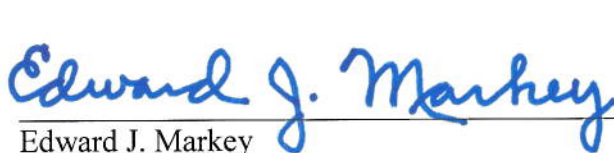
illegally caught seafood out of the U.S. market and provide important information to consumers about the seafood they eat. As part of this comprehensive solution, we encourage you to include in your recommendations measures aimed at increasing interagency coordination to combat seafood fraud and the introduction of illegally-caught fish into the U.S. market. In particular, we suggest that you review the recommendations contained in the 2009 Government Accountability Office report that detailed how interagency coordination could be improved to better combat seafood fraud.

The Task Force's recommendations should also include measures specifically aimed at keeping illegally-caught fish out of the U.S. market, including documentation that demonstrates seafood imported to or sold in the United States was caught legally. The recommendations should also require that all seafood sold in the U.S. be traceable from harvest to sale and ensure that the basic catch information we require from U.S. seafood harvesters is required of all seafood. Similarly, we encourage you to consider measures that will increase consumer awareness and confidence by providing them with basic information about the identity and origin of their seafood. Finally, any recommendations made by the Task Force should include enforcement mechanisms from agencies' existing authorities. Along with implementation of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, these would be significant steps forward in the effort to keep illegally-caught fish out of the U.S. market.

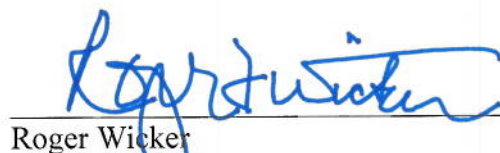
Our constituents include seafood consumers, harvesters, and businesses, and we all have an interest in protecting our oceans in order to ensure a sustainable seafood supply for generations to come. We appreciate the Task Force's efforts to engage stakeholders in the process of developing recommendations through opportunities for public comment thus far. To help ensure continued stakeholder involvement, we ask that you provide an additional opportunity for stakeholders, including fishermen, processors, and other participants in the seafood industry to comment on the Task Force's conclusions and recommendations before they are finalized.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you on these important issues.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Roger Wicker
United States Senator

Cc: Margaret A. Hamburg, Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration
Kathryn Sullivan, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Michael Boots, Acting Chair, Council on Environmental Quality