

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

SESSION

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## SENATOR BERT K. STEDMAN

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### SPONSOR STATEMENT Senate Bill 145

“An Act authorizing the making of loans for upgrade of commercial fishing tender vessels and gear.”

Senate Bill 145 makes a small change in the Commercial Fishing Loan Act (AS 16.10.300 – 370) to allow Alaskan owners of fish tenders to be eligible for loans to improve the quality of our seafood products.

Under the current law, the Division of Investments in the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development offers low interest loans to fishing permit holders to upgrade their equipment in order to improve the quality of the seafood product they are handling. Fish tenders, who buy fish on the fishing grounds from fishermen and transport the product to processing plants, are an important part of the seafood handling process. However, they are not defined as fishermen and are therefore not currently eligible for the product quality improvement loans. The state has taken some positive steps to emphasize quality improvement on fishing vessels and in processing plants, but has neglected this segment of the seafood production system.

This bill will allow qualified Alaska resident tender owners to participate in the state’s loan program to upgrade their equipment, encouraging another key component of the fishing industry to improve the way fish are handled and increasing the quality and value of Alaska’s seafood. SB 145 is supported by the Alaska Independent Tendermen’s Association.

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