

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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July 21, 2021

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Admiral Karl Schultz
Commandant
United States Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Admiral Schultz:

We are writing to request an extension to the deadline for complying with the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) requirements for commercial fishing vessels that operate in the Alaska region. As you know, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) determined a few years ago that fishing vessels over 300GT operating in the Alaska region are not covered by any fleet-wide GMDSS exemption and must comply with all requirements for Sea Area 3 or Sea Area 4. Vessels operating under an exemption or waiver have been given until January 31, 2022 to comply with these GMDSS equipment carriage requirements.

Given the strong safety record of the fishing fleet that has operated in the Alaska region over the last 20 years without meeting the GMDSS requirements for Sea Area 3 or Sea Area 4, Congress passed a permanent GMDSS exemption for these vessels as a section in the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2020. This legislation exempts fishing vessels that primarily operate in the Alaska region, including fishing vessels that transit from states in the Pacific Northwest to conduct fishing operations in the Alaska region, from the requirements relating to carriage of VHF-DSC and MF-DSC equipment under subpart W of part 80 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations.

We understand that the FCC and USCG are working together to implement this pending legislation and appreciate the cooperative efforts to enact regulations before the existing vessel-level waivers expire on January 31, 2022. With that said, shipyard work for the Alaska region fishing fleet is typically scheduled well in advance to ensure space availability at the shipyard and to ensure operators can build out their fishing plans around this work. Additionally, due to the pandemic it is increasingly hard to obtain parts and equipment as shipments are extensively delayed and inventories are limited. Given the uncertainty of when the new regulations will be implemented, vessel owners are unsure of how to proceed in the meantime. They do not want to purchase equipment and provide training to their crews that can cost upward of \$100,000 if it will not be required, but do not want to be out of compliance should the new regulations not take effect prior to the above waiver's deadline. This is why we are asking you to delay the deadline for compliance to no sooner than January 31, 2023 or one year from the date the new regulations are implemented, whichever is the latter.

While we eagerly await the new regulations, we are grateful for any assistance that you can provide to our fishing fleet by communicating a decision to delay the implementation deadline for GMDSS requirements. This delay will allow additional time for any needed work to be performed and provide a certainty that is greatly needed as the entire fishing industry is heavily impacted by the health and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Thank you for your prompt attention this matter.

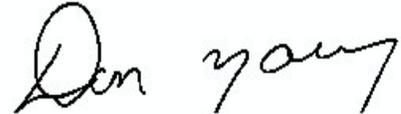
Sincerely,



LISA MURKOWSKI
U.S. Senator



DAN SULLIVAN
U.S. Senator



DON YOUNG
Congressman for All Alaska