



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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SENATE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE APPROVES S1122 No Cost Registry Legislation Needs Full Senate Vote Before December Ends

Trenton, NJ - The New Jersey Senate Environment Committee today voted unanimously to approve Senate Bill 1122, paving the way for a full vote before the Senate. The vote in the Committee this morning gives New Jersey a chance to implement a new state registry program to meet the federal registry requirements set by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

Sponsored by Sen. Jeff Van Drew (D-Cape May) and Sen. Jennifer Beck (R-Red Bank), S1122 would require the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to maintain a free annual saltwater registry program to meet the new federal mandate for data collection, allowing New Jersey's coastal fishermen to avoid paying a \$15 federal registration fee beginning January 1.

An Assembly version of the legislation (A823) has already passed (54-16) which would allow the state to apply for exempted state designation from the federal registration requirement. The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) and its New Jersey chapter are hoping to see S1122 moved to the floor of the Senate in the coming days to have the vote done in time for the approaching deadline.

"New Jersey's fishing community made their voices heard, and we want to thank all those Senators who helped get this bill to the committee for discussion today," said RFA Executive Director Jim Donofrio. "Our praise of course to Committee Chair Smith for putting the bill up for a vote today, I know he's had concerns with the legislation and was waiting for input from the DEP, and that's why it was so good to have an opportunity to see discussion of the bill in the Committee."

The Senate hearing chamber was standing room only today as members of the recreational fishing community turned out to participate in the process. While a DEP representative asked the Committee to consider incorporating a \$5 fee on the registration, the Committee heard compelling testimony from Sen. Van Drew to vote in favor of the no fee registry.

"There was some confusion at first because some legislators weren't aware of the fact that fishermen already pay a 10% excise tax to the federal government on every piece of saltwater tackle they buy in addition to fuel at the docks, what's estimated to be more than \$60 million for the 2006 calendar year," Donofrio said. "When members of the Environment Committee heard today that the \$3.8 million in Sport Fish Restoration Funds coming back to the state are used for salaries and other expenses instead of important programs like this, it was a pretty clear message," he added. "Sen. Van Drew has

Senate Committee members voting in favor the free angler registration bill included Beck, Sen. Linda R. Greenstein (D-Monroe), Sen. Robert M. Gordon (D-Fair Lawn) and Sen. Christopher "Kip" Bateman (R-Somerville).

"In the end, the facts won out over the rhetoric, and the saltwater fishing community made their voices heard," Donofrio said. "But now it's time to call your state senator back to thank them for helping move S1122 to the Committee, and ask that they please help move this bill to the floor of the senate before the month is out," he added.

RFA and the RFA-NJ have actively lobbied on behalf of registry legislation since 2007 when the new federal Magnuson Stevens Act was signed by the president, requiring the implementation of a phonebook of coastal anglers.

Last week, NMFS announced that a \$15 fee on each individual saltwater angler will be instituted as of January 1 for saltwater anglers not currently registered through the fed or by other state coastal registrations. A823 was sponsored by New Jersey Assembly representatives Nelson Albano (D-Cape May), Matt Milam (D-Cape May), John Amodeo (R-Northfield), Celeste Riley (D-Bridgeton), Paul Moriarty (D-Turnersville), Scott T. Rumana (R-Wayne) and Gilbert Wilson (D-Audubon), and paved the way for the potential passage of the companion bill, S1122, in time to meet the federal mandate.

To find your state Senator's phone number, visit <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/members/legsearch.asp> and call immediately to give thanks and ask for support of S1122.

For more information on the federal registry program, visit <https://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov/>

The Recreational Fishing Alliance is a national, grassroots political action organization representing recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on marine fisheries issues. RFA's Mission is to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers, protect marine, boat and tackle industry jobs, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our Nation's saltwater fisheries. For information, call 888-JOIN-RFA or visit www.joinrfa.org.