



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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RFA PRAISES RHODE ISLAND GOVERNOR FOR VETO SALTWATER LICENSE IS NOT A FEDERAL REQUIREMENT

The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) today praised Rhode Island Governor Donald L. Carcieri for using his veto power to quash a proposed law to ban saltwater fishing in Rhode Island waters without a license. The new user fee on saltwater fishing was approved in a nine-hour session of the part-time General Assembly on October 30, and required that saltwater anglers purchase a state license to legally fish in coastal waters as of January 1, 2010.

"To be able to fish the saltwaters of Rhode Island is a birthright," said Governor Carcieri. In a letter to the Rhode Island Speaker of the House of Representatives, Governor Carcieri outlined his reasons for disapproving of the legislation and respectfully urged the support of the veto. "This is the Ocean State. It is a place where people have been free, up to now, to cast a line into Narragansett Bay without government intrusion," he said.

"We're with the governor on this," said Jim Donofrio, RFA Executive Director. "I know there are some fishermen who think that all this money was going to go to great use, but when you look at what's happening with dedicated funding in other states it's very hard to justify another bloated user fee, especially when funds are going solely to state administrative costs." Donofrio points to recent issues with both Connecticut and New York fishing licenses as perfect examples of a well-intentioned nightmare. "Connecticut fast-tracked a \$10 saltwater license this past June, which suddenly skyrocketed to \$30 by the fall in the face of a state budget deficit," Donofrio said. "If Connecticut follows ahead with plans to charge out-of-staters \$60 to fish in saltwater, where do you think traveling anglers will go in 2010 to fish on vacation?"

In New York, U.S. Senator Charles Schumer recently called on the state's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to completely overhaul its saltwater license plan and incorporate a free registration to satisfy the data-collection needs of the federal fisheries service, or NMFS. "The new system is too complex and too restrictive for fishing families," Schumer said of the new saltwater license in New York, adding that he's made an appeal to the U.S. Department of Commerce and the DEC to establish a system that is that is free and permanent.

The Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA), the nation's primary fisheries law, requires NMFS to implement of a registry of saltwater anglers. A free federal registry is scheduled to go online in 2010 with exemptions given to states with their own registry in place by 2011. "This is being done so we can get more accurate data and science to manage our fisheries," Donofrio said, explaining that a mandated "phone book" of anglers could be accomplished without asking anglers to pay administrative costs. "We have simple registry legislation written and ready to roll in other states, but some activists and legislators in Rhode Island chose to ignore the registry requirements and focus solely on the funding portion."

"The federal government wants a more accurate and efficient means for acquiring recreational catch and effort data," explained Carcieri. "This is hardly a compelling reason or exigent circumstance warranting the imposition of any fee and licensing requirement on a Rhode Island citizen who occasionally takes his or her children fishing," the governor added.

Elisa Jackman at Snug Harbor Marina of Wakefield, RI said she's appreciative of Governor Carcieri's decision. "Snug Harbor Marina fully supports the Governor's decision to veto the

saltwater fishing license, and hopes our elected legislators will also favor his decision and protect our angler's Constitutional right."

"Governor Carcieri recognized this license attempt for what it was, pure spin and an attempt to get more money into the general fund," Donofrio said. "We thank the governor for using his veto power to protect all the saltwater anglers who fish Rhode Island waters, not just those willing to pay top dollar to do so."

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The Recreational Fishing Alliance is a national, grassroots political action organization representing recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on marine fisheries issues. The RFA 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 more information, call 888-JOIN-RFA or visit www.joinrfa.org.