

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 29, 2016

Chairman John Fleming
Subcommittee on Water,
Power and Oceans
Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Jared Huffman
Subcommittee on Water,
Power and Oceans
Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Fleming and Ranking Member Huffman:

It has come to our attention that the House Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee plans to hold a legislative hearing on H.R. 3070, the *EEZ Clarification Act*. This legislation seeks to remap the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in Long Island Sound to a new landward boundary between Montauk, New York and Point Judith, Rhode Island. However, for the Subcommittee to fully understand the scope of this legislation, we believe that it is prudent to invite stakeholders from all areas impacted by the EEZ change—including the state of Connecticut.

As you know, this legislation would transfer 150 square miles of the EEZ in and around Block Island Sound to the states of New York and Rhode Island for fisheries management. This transfer of fisheries control will deny Connecticut fishermen from harvesting in these waters which they have fished for decades. The New England Marine Fisheries Council has been managing fisheries in this EEZ since 1976 and this change would result in confusion and subsequent fines for Connecticut fishermen who have historically fished in these waters. While supporters of this legislation contend that it will empower local fishermen by restoring access to fish stocks and allowing state management of waters, we believe it is imperative to underscore the major economic losses that the Connecticut fishing industry would face as a result of this misguided bill.

In addition to negatively impacting our fishing industry, this bill would serve a major blow to the rebuilding of the striped bass stock. In a letter from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Commissioner Robert Klee contends, “(t)he waters around Block Island seem to be holding an unusually large proportion of the adult striped bass population in recent years. Converting these federal waters to state jurisdiction will expose these reproductive age fish to significant mortality which our public hearings on striped bass management tell us would be opposed by the vast majority of anglers.” Furthermore, this conversion to state fisheries management and subsequent increased striped bass harvest would contradict an approved 2014

addendum by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) which directs states to reduce striped bass harvests by 25%.

It is our belief that this legislation was narrowly crafted to benefit selected states. With Connecticut state government officials and local fishermen alike vocally opposing H.R. 3070—including Connecticut members of the Southern New England Fishermen and Lobstermen's Association—we strongly urge you to include an opposing witness from Connecticut at the legislative hearing to better understand the full scope of this bill. Attached to this letter, you will find letters of opposition from Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner Rob Klee and Southern New England Fishermen and Lobstermen's Association member Joe Gilbert. We will continue to monitor the progress of this legislation. If you have any questions, please contact Alexa Combelic in Congressman Courtney's office at 202-225-2076 or alexa.combelic@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator



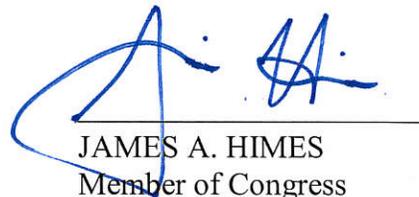
JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senator



ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress



JAMES A. HIMES
Member of Congress



ELIZABETH H. ESTY
Member of Congress