Crew Data Project Making Way in Legislature

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Jacob Resneck/KMXT

A House bill being circulated in Juneau would help the state track commercial fishing's economic impact in Alaska. The initiative would log crew data from commercial fishing vessels.

An earlier version that had put the onus on skippers to report crew data stalled last year following opposition from the state's largest fishermen's group. But this version is different. Instead of putting the burden on skippers, it's individual crew members who would fill out the forms.

House Majority Leader Alan Austerman of Kodiak is the bill's sponsor.

-- crew data 1 :06 "You know, I'm pleased ... way to go."

The United Fishermen of Alaska had expressed skepticism of earlier forms of the bill. But executive director Mark Vinsel says the current bill which asks crew members to log the name and homeport of each vessel they fish for appears to be well-conceived.

-- crew data 2 :24 "The bill calls ... we're all for it."

One of the bill's proponents is Kodiak commercial fisherman Terry Haines, a former Kodiak city councilman. He says tracking crew data would help quantify the economic impact of commercial fishing.

-- crew data 3 :55 "The reason this data ... we look at."

The program is entirely voluntary. And Haines says he has concerns that there's neither a stick nor carrot to prod crew members to take the time to participate.

-- crew data 4 :33 "It seems to me ... need this data."

The data would be shared with federal fishing regulators and the state's labor department. The bill is scheduled to be heard in committees this week.

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