

## Additions to USCG Bill Benefits Fishermen

Wednesday, 12 February 2014

Jay Barrett/KMXT

Several provisions to the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act added by Alaska Congressman Don Young could have direct implications in Kodiak.

One would give the Coast Guard commandant the discretion to approve leases of submerged or tidal land for longer than the current term of five years. He cited such unused land in Womens Bay, which could be freed up for long-term leasing if the act passes. Young said the current limitations inhibit future economic development.

Additional language in the bill would require the Coast Guard to determine if it's feasible to refurbish the icebreaker Polar Sea, which is currently out of service. If the ship is not worth putting back in service, the Coast Guard would also be tasked to look at leasing or purchasing new icebreakers. Only two icebreakers are currently in the U.S. fleet.

The Maritime Lien Reform Act is included in the reauthorization bill. It would prohibit creditors from placing a lien on commercial fishing permits. State law already prohibits such liens, but the practice is allowable under federal admiralty law.

Also of interest to commercial fishermen, the act would permanently exempt fishing vessels and other small commercial vessels from having to obtain EPA permits before discharging such rain water runoff, air conditioner condensate, and bilge water from their vessels.