



GULF FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

The largest organization of offshore fishermen in the Southeastern US

July 2, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Democratic Leader Pelosi,

Please accept this letter from the Gulf Fishermen's Association opposing H.R. 200, the "*Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act*." The Gulf Fisherman's Association represents commercial fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico who are dependent upon healthy fishery resources to support our way of life.

H.R. 200 is a threat to the success record of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), weakening the science-based management that has made the U.S. a leader in the field. The provisions within H.R. 200 that will add exceptions to rebuilding timelines, exemptions to annual catch limits, and mandate allocation reviews are unnecessary. The Magnuson-Stevens Act in its current form is working and is responsible for rebuilding dozens of stocks. In fact, NOAA's Status of the Stocks released in March showed that overfished stocks are at an all-time low.¹ Why change what's already working?

Additionally, Rep. Graves' Amendment 26 to H.R.200 makes it clear that this bill is being used to harm commercial snapper and grouper fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico. This amendment would open the door for additional taxation of commercial fishermen through resource rents and royalties. It also is an attempt to eliminate charter-for-hire and commercial representation on the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils Council by unfairly implying that they have a "fiduciary conflict of interest". The language in this amendment makes us ask the following questions:

- Why is it reasonable to impose a tax on commercial fishermen while at the same time eliminating their voice in the decision-making process?
- If commercial fishermen should not serve on the Gulf Council because of a supposed financial "conflict of interest," why should marine suppliers and scientists whose companies and universities have received funding from recreational lobbying groups be able to serve?

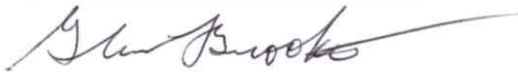
In conclusion, H.R. 200 is not the fix for our fisheries that it is advertised to be. It threatens to turn back the clock on fisheries management and take us back to a time when there was less fish for everyone. That hurts both commercial and recreational fishermen. It would also damage the

¹ NOAA. Status of the Stocks Quarterly Update. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/population-assessments/fishery-stock-status-updates>.

Council system, which has been effective at creating regional solutions for their fisheries. Lastly, this bill is a failure in bi-partisanship, as evidenced by a shortage of democratic co-sponsors and a lack of consideration for all sectors of fisheries. It seeks to help recreational fishermen at the expense of commercial fishermen who work hard to provide this great country with wild sustainable seafood. That's something the Gulf Fishermen's Association cannot support and urge all representatives to vote "no" on H.R. 200.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the "*Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act.*" We hope that you will take our concerns seriously and urge you to vote "no".

Sincerely,
Glen Brooks
[Gulf Fishermen's Association](#)

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Glen Brooks", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.