

**TESTIMONY OF  
Deirdre Gilbert,  
Director of State Marine Policy**

**The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is testifying  
in Opposition to**

**L.D. 492 An Act To Expand Eligibility for Lobster and Crab Fishing Licenses for Veterans**

**Before the Committee on Marine Resources  
Sponsored by Representative Kumiega  
Date of Hearing: March 18, 2015**

Senator Baker, Representative Kumiega, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Deirdre Gilbert, Director of State Marine Policy for the Department of Marine Resources, and I am testifying on behalf of the Department in opposition to LD 492.

Since the beginning of the limited entry system for lobster in 1999, the law has provided a license exemption for individuals serving in the United States Armed Forces and the United States Coast Guard. That exemption has always provided that such individuals do not need to purchase their lobster and crab fishing license while they are in such service. Specifically, they simply needed to have harvested lobsters while in possession of a Class I, II, or III license within one year prior to entering the service, and they needed to request the license back within one year of their discharge from service. Originally, it applied to individuals serving not more than 6 years. During the last legislative session, that time period was expanded to 10 years and it was made clear that such individuals are not subject to any other licensing requirements that could be created in the future (a minimum level of landings, for example).

The reason for providing the existing military exemption was to allow an active lobsterman who wanted to serve their country to "interrupt" their lobstering career for a finite amount of time, but then return to their work on the water when their service was done. This bill before you would not require that the military service be the reason that the individual gave up their license. For example, someone who had a lobster license 20 years ago, gave it up for other reasons, and then later entered the military, would be eligible to get that license back, without doing the apprenticeship program or going on the waiting list.

Serving one's country in the military is certainly one of the most honorable things an individual can do. But in order for that military service to qualify an individual for a lobster license for which they are not otherwise eligible, there should be a close connection between the giving up of the license, and the military service, as the current law requires.

In our view, this legislation is yet another symptom of the shortfalls of the existing entry system for the lobster fishery. Rather than granting greater exemptions to specific groups of individuals, the Department remains committed to continuing the necessary discussions with the lobster industry, and those individuals who would like to someday get a license, in order to find a better, more workable system.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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