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April 7, 2009

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Oppose H.R. 1584, *The Flexibility in Rebuilding American Fisheries Act of 2009*

Dear Representative,

Our nation's marine fisheries provide sustenance and income for millions of Americans and are renewable resources if well managed. Unfortunately, recently introduced legislation, H.R. 1584, threatens the long-term ecological *and* economic sustainability of these fish populations by giving managers the "flexibility" to avoid tough but necessary decisions. We the undersigned leaders in the conservation community **urge you not to cosponsor this misguided legislation.**

After decades of mismanagement that led to costly declines in fish populations and the fishing communities that depend on them, Congress unanimously reauthorized the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) in 2006. MSA is the premier law governing management of federal ocean fisheries. In it, Congress established clear requirements to end overfishing and rebuild depleted fish populations to healthy levels in as short a time as possible depending on the species' biology.

Discredited arguments for weakening the MSA and delaying rebuilding have resurfaced in H.R. 1584, *The Flexibility in Rebuilding American Fisheries Act of 2009*. This bill would drastically weaken the rebuilding provisions of the MSA by allowing fisheries managers to place short-term economics in front of the long-term needs of our ocean fish populations and delay indefinitely critical rebuilding actions. Moreover, and contrary to the explicit intent of Congress in the 2006 MSA reauthorization, the bill would allow the overexploitation of our most vulnerable fish populations.

Historical experience - along with scientific and economic studies - demonstrate that delaying rebuilding fish stocks increases fishing pressure on vulnerable fish populations and ecosystems.

This pressure threatens the ability of stocks to rebuild, and delays the economic benefits of healthy fish populations and marine ecosystems that coastal communities depend on. For these reasons, we urge you to not cosponsor H.R. 1584.

Sincerely,

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