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Senator Jerry Ward Kenai

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Ward's Bill on Fish Labeling is Now Law

(JUNEAU) –Sen. Jerry Ward (R-Kenai), watched Wednesday as his legislation allowing labeling of wild salmon became law during a bill signing ceremony with Gov. Tony Knowles. This was the third bill this session the governor has signed.

[Senate Bill 208](#), which is now law, will allow labeling of salmon and halibut products sold in Alaska to be labeled as “wild,” as well as “antibiotic, hormone and dye free,” provided the fish is harvested from an ocean or river and has not been raised in captivity.

Ward's labeling law gives Alaska fishermen and processors one more tool to market their product. This has been a particular area of interest following Lt. Gov. Fran Ulmer's earnest, but failed attempts to get the Federal Organic Standards Board to recognize Alaskan salmon as “organic.”

Ward introduced SB 208 this legislation after hearing about the lengths fish farmers go to “color” fish. Using artificial means, fish farmers alter the color of the fish to give them the deep red appearance of wild salmon.

“The fish farmers are almost all using hormones to get bigger fish, and artificial chemicals to hide the dull coloring of farm-raised fish,” said Ward. “I think the people of Alaska have a right to know whether their fish is wild or chemically enhanced.”

Knowles agreed and applauded Ward's efforts with this important piece of legislation.

The governor was not the only person singing the praises of Ward's fish labeling legislation, the fishing industry has also spoken out about the importance of this law, especially during this current rough period in Alaska's second-oldest, second-largest industry.

“We are thrilled to see such support from the Alaska Legislature on such an important matter of food safety,” said Dale Kelly, executive director of the Alaska Trollers Association.

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“It’s an idea that has been a long time coming, “ said Chuck McCallum, executive director of the Chignik Seiners Association. “Labeling is a big thing in all consumer markets; people want to know what they are eating. I also think it will have a positive impact on our commercial fishing industry as well.”

Ward said he is glad to see so much support and excitement over the bill’s passage.

“This positive legislation will help our state’s fishing industry,” said Ward. “I thank the governor for his quick action in giving consumers the ability to make informed decisions about what they eat.”

Print Media and Webmasters: *Photos of the bill signing ceremony are available at www.akrepublicans.org*

Broadcaster’s Note: *Audio comments from Sen. Ward are available at www.akrepublicans.org*

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