



Alaska Trollers Association

130 Seward #205
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 586-9400
(907) 586-4473
ata@gci.net

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Governor Sean Parnell
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Governor Parnell:

On behalf of the Alaska Trollers Association (ATA) I am writing to express our concern about the lack of affordable health care insurance options for the fishing industry. For many years, ATA has worked with other industry members around the nation, in an attempt to secure access to group healthcare packages for fishing families and organizations - to no avail.

We learned today of a significant grant opportunity that is available to the state of Alaska, to conduct research into health insurance exchanges. A well-designed and efficiently implemented health exchange could be of great assistance to the fishing industry and a host of other small businesses across the state.

It is our understanding that the state did not apply for this grant during a previous offering. Why is that? From our perspective, it is difficult to see a downside to studying the issue.

48 states have already received planning grants for health insurance exchanges. Apparently Minnesota has requested another opportunity to receive this money. Given that the grant comes with no strings attached, wouldn't it be wise for Alaska to also apply for the grant and explore insurance options for its residents?

An insurance exchange could finally provide self-employed and small business owners and employees the opportunity to buy affordable health insurance. It could also help to reduce healthcare costs for other Alaskans and provide a better range of high value and quality options.

Health exchanges are slated to be implemented in 2014. The question is whether this exchange will be run by Alaskans or by the federal government. There are probably opportunities to partner with other states that could also be explored. A great many questions exist regarding what type of plan is most appropriate and useful for our diverse

population. There are already many health exchange formats that Alaska can review before deciding what might work best and who should run such a program. The state seems best situated for facilitating the interests and conducting such a review.

A planning grant would certainly help Alaskans identify and work through the important questions and craft a program that best fits our needs, regardless who ultimately runs it. Information on the grant program can be found at:

<http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=vs6RN28c13Xyzs5Wy01ffl1ptVnstnXhnh1TpqfQy5S81Rh7vB2k!-265442666?oppId=65413&mode=VIEW>

ATA is deeply concerned about the long-term outlook for healthcare, not only for our members and industry, but the nation as a whole. Fishermen know far too well that the cost of even basic health coverage is out of reach for far too many people, particularly those who are self-employed or run small businesses. This is one of the most significant economic issues facing our state and country today.

ATA would like to be involved in a solution. If there is anything we can do to assist the state on this important issue, please don't hesitate to contact me. I am available to meet at your earliest convenience.

Best regards,

Dale Kelley
Executive Director