

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 8, 2005

His Excellency W. Mitt Romney
Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House
Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Romney:

We are writing to urge you join us in requesting that the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) issue an economic injury disaster declaration on behalf of the thousands of Massachusetts fishermen and their families in Essex, Plymouth, Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes and Nantucket counties who have been affected by the closure of shellfish beds due to red tide. This declaration will help our fishermen and their families obtain low-interest economic injury disaster loans from the SBA to help their small businesses survive during this crisis.

As you know, Massachusetts waters are being plagued by the worst outbreak of red tide since 1972, which has resulted in the closure of most shellfish areas in the state. This outbreak has devastated approximately 1,700 shellfish fishermen in Massachusetts at the worst possible time. Many of these fishermen provide shellfish to businesses on our coast that cater to tourists seeking local seafood during the summer months. The fishermen and other small businesses affected by the red tide disaster are an important part of the economic and cultural history of Massachusetts' coastal communities. Emergency assistance for the shellfish industry is important for the continued growth of the Massachusetts economy. We believe these fishermen deserve access to low-interest SBA loans to assist them through the disaster recovery period.

The levels of toxicity from this red tide outbreak have been escalating in recent weeks. Local officials currently estimate that many shellfish beds will be closed for most of the summer months. This will have an extraordinary impact on the shellfish fishermen and their families who depend upon seasonal income to survive year-round. It will also affect the profitability of many other small businesses, specifically restaurants, which cater to tourists during the summer months.

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We hope that you will make this request and provide the necessary state certification of areas hurt by this red tide disaster to help small businesses in Massachusetts survive.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,












