



June 6, 2005

The Honorable Richard Cheney  
President of the Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510-0010

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Bush Administration, I respectfully submit for congressional consideration and action a bill "to provide the necessary authority to the Secretary of Commerce for the establishment and implementation of a regulatory system for offshore aquaculture in the United States Exclusive Economic Zone." I also enclose a detailed section-by-section analysis for the draft bill.

Aquaculture refers to the growing of fish, shellfish, plants, and other aquatic organisms. Currently, one-third of global seafood production is provided through aquaculture. The proposed bill will facilitate expansion of this activity in federal waters beyond the limits of state jurisdiction, where there is significant potential for development of the U.S. aquaculture industry to meet the growing demand for seafood. Technologies now are available to withstand the challenges of the offshore ocean environment, allowing this expansion to occur. By adopting these technologies, the United States can boost production of valuable marine species while creating jobs that contribute to economic development and the revitalization of depressed coastal communities. Additional domestic supplies of nutritious seafood will reduce pressure on wild fisheries. Future technological innovation by the offshore aquaculture industry will advance U.S. technology and boost U.S. competitiveness in world markets.

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy has acknowledged the growing significance of offshore aquaculture for seafood production and identified the need for a comprehensive offshore aquaculture regulatory framework in the United States. This draft bill responds directly to the Commission's recommendations for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to develop a comprehensive, environmentally sound permitting and regulatory program for offshore aquaculture, and fulfills the Administration's commitment, in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, to propose national offshore aquaculture legislation in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress.

The overall purpose of the proposal is to provide the necessary authorities to the Secretary of Commerce for the establishment, implementation, and enforcement of a comprehensive regulatory system for offshore aquaculture in the Exclusive Economic Zone. This includes the authority to set additional environmental requirements, if necessary, to ensure that such development proceeds in an environmentally responsible manner that is consistent with stated policy to protect wild stocks and the quality of marine ecosystems and is compatible with other uses. The intent of the Act is to complement rather than supersede existing resource management authorities. As such, it provides for coordination and consultation with other federal agencies, the Fishery Management Councils, and coastal states.

The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to enact this legislation. The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the transmittal of this draft bill from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely,

Carlos M. Gutierrez

Enclosures

Identical letters sent to:

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert  
Speaker of the House  
of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-6501

The Honorable Bill Frist  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-1601

The Honorable Tom DeLay  
Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-6503

The Honorable Harold Reid  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-7010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-6502

The Honorable Richard Pombo  
Chairman, Committee on Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-6201

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall II  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on Resources  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-6201

The Honorable Ted Stevens  
Chairman, Committee on Commerce,  
Science and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-6125

The Honorable Daniel Inouye  
Co-Chairman, Committee on Commerce,  
Science and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-6125