



Jared Golden
Congress of the United States
2nd District of Maine

March 3, 2026

Hon. Howard Lutnick
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dr. Neil Jacobs
Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Lutnick and Dr. Jacobs,

I am writing regarding the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s creation of the position of "Fisherman in Residence," a post for which Dustin Delano of Friendship, Maine, was appointed last year. This new position at NOAA is a forward-thinking action and a step in the right direction in managing fisheries in the U.S., and Mr. Delano is the right man for the job.

I am aware that two of my colleagues on the House Natural Resources Committee (HNRC) — Ranking Member Jared Huffman (CA-02) and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Maxine Dexter (OR-03) — have written to you and gone to the media to cast doubts over Mr. Delano's fitness for this position. They claim that because Mr. Delano has worked as a fisherman and is a vocal advocate for Maine's seafood harvesters, this must mean he has a conflict of interest. They seem to believe that the only place for people with real-world harvesting experience is at the receiving end of government regulations — not in the rooms where those decisions are made.

To claim that Mr. Delano is "conflicted" in this role is wrong. Mr. Delano is a contractor under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act — a law written by Congress specifically to allow people with experience *outside* of government to serve temporary posts like the one to which he has been appointed.

Mr. Delano is a perfect fit for the position. He has years of harvesting experience in a variety of different fisheries. Further, he understands the importance of good regulations to protect the future of a sustainable fishery. His personal experience, knowledge and respect of his peers led to his involvement on the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA) board, the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative, and to his work in creating the New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association (NEFSA) in 2023.

I know some of my colleagues on the House Natural Resources Committee have at times disagreed with Mr. Delano about the best way to manage our fisheries. But we cannot allow disagreements to fuel specious charges

of unethical behavior. These accusations, however subtle, reflect the misguided belief that there is *nothing* government bureaucrats could possibly learn from those working Mainers who actually have lived and fished our coasts for generations. They could not be more wrong.

To the people in my District who work in our fisheries, many of whom come from generations of harvesters, these unwarranted attacks on Mr. Delano will be seen as part of a longstanding trend of government officials working to silence, question, and undermine the valuable insights and firsthand expertise of harvesters.

They have watched as NOAA, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), and the various other agencies that regulate our fisheries have made decisions based on bad data, faulty stock assessments, and irresponsibly pessimistic computer-generated models. They know these decisions have been made based on the opinions of bureaucrats and scientists with no on-water harvesting experience, who have consistently failed to understand or even communicate reliably with the men and women who work our waters every day.

Good policy and regulations must not be created in a vacuum, and those who are being regulated must have a real voice in the process. I am confident the creation of the "Fisherman in Residence" will give voice to harvesters, and I applaud NOAA for taking this proactive step to bring fishermen into the fold.

Mr. Delano's exemplary record as a fisherman and advocate for the marine resources economy speaks for itself. I applaud NOAA for identifying the need for a real harvester, not another bureaucrat, to have a seat at the table and to provide input and clarity on fisheries issues.

Sincerely,



Jared Golden
Member of Congress