

Senators urge drive on fishing subsidies

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A bipartisan group of senators urged the United States on Thursday to work to abolish state subsidies that jeopardize the world's fragile fish stocks.

Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska, the top Republican on the Senate Commerce Committee, was chief sponsor of the resolution, which called for continued efforts to limit those supports.

"Many countries with subsidized industrial fishing fleets have sought to exploit not only their own waters, but also the high seas," Stevens said in a statement. "These subsidies ... must end."

The resolution comes days after a new U.S. proposal was taken up at the World Trade Organization, a proposal that seeks to limit the kinds of fishing subsidies the Bush administration argues have led to overfishing around the world.

In the crosshairs are capacity-increasing subsidies, which include state support for ships, fuel, or fishing equipment. They are estimated at a global \$20 billion a year.

Even if an agreement is reached at the WTO on reducing world fishing subsidies, it would not become binding unless an overall deal materializes in the Doha round of world trade talks, which remains far from certain.

The resolution's cosponsors included **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**, a Hawaii Democrat who chairs the Commerce Committee, along with a dozen other members such as **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**, a Mississippi Republican, and **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**, a California Democrat.