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## **Editorial: 'State of the Union' jobs talk rings hollow for fisheries**

A lot of voters may have felt a bit better about the state of their government after viewing President Obama's State of the Union address Tuesday night.

But soaring rhetoric, extended applause from lawmakers and hearty handshakes all-around won't solve the problems that afflict this country, however.

At the core of any such address, the bottom line is how much Americans can believe what Obama's preaching. And the president's focus on jobs Tuesday night once again raises a very basic credibility question:

If this administration truly recognizes the need to spur growth through the private sector and create more employment, how can this president and his administration not only support, but actively push for, a national fisheries policy committed to killing waterfront jobs and driving small independent boat owners right out of business — and right out of a way of life that's been a core part of Gloucester and other communities for generations.

As Obama talked of growing jobs in other fields, and the nation's financial investments and commitments, the policies of his own Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, and NOAA chief Jane Lubchenco seemed more and more absurd.

Fishermen, of course, don't need the government to throw them money to grow jobs. They only want to be able to earn a living as they have in the past — especially now, considering the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's retired top scientist, Steve Murawski, noted earlier this month that fishermen's efforts have brought an end to "overfishing" off America's three coasts.

Fishermen, in fact, wouldn't be seeking any "emergency aid" at all if their own federal government — using documented bad science and obscene, excessive law enforcement tactics confirmed by the Commerce Department's own Inspector General — hadn't wrongly forced them to the brink of financial disaster with overly tight catch limits and a "catch share" management system that drives more control of the industry away from the small independents and into larger corporate hands.

Indeed, while there's obviously been a consolidation of the fishing industry in Gloucester and elsewhere over the past two decades, the fact is, the industry should be as healthy now as it's been in years, with rebuilt fish stocks now clearly sustainable, according to valid science.

Yet, the Obama administration won't let them fish to anywhere near the level they should be allowed. And Lubchenco insists on pushing her Environmental Defense Fund-backed catch share economic program aimed, as she's admitted, at bringing further and significant reductions to the fleet.

That, of course, means driving out, not creating jobs. And Locke's insulting refusal to raise catch limits earlier this month shows that he, as the nation's top Commerce official, supports keeping harsh clamps on American workers, and widening the trade deficit in a U.S. market that already imports an embarrassing 80 percent of our seafood.

Yes, there were promising shows of bipartisanship that took place in the House chamber Tuesday night. And we should give Obama credit for recognizing that getting the country back on course will won't be easy or without rancor.

"We should have no illusions about the work ahead of us," he said. "All of it will take time. And it will be harder because we will argue about everything — the cost, the details, the letter of every law."

But all of Obama's good words voice Tuesday night will only ring true if he stands up and changes the course of one of his own departments — Commerce's and NOAA's blatant, shameful push to send the small independent fishermen packing the way of the family farm.

In other words, when it comes to ocean management, the president needs to take a very basic step: Practice what he's preaching.

