Seafood processing plant plans unveiled

By DON LEWIS
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NEW ORLEANS — A world-class seafood processing plant will be built in Plaquemines Parish and will mean at least 200 new jobs, U.S. Rep. John B. Breaux, D-Crowley, said Tuesday.

The official announcement will come at 2:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Plaquemines Parish Courthouse in Pointe-a-la-Hache.

Besides Breaux, others attending the ceremonies will include representatives of the three largest commercial fishing concerns in Japan, who will develop a “net to market” plan for Louisiana seafood, said Mark Folse, a spokesman for the congressman.

They are Capt. Bihiko Rishimori, of Nichiryo Fishery Co.; Inao Kuramoto, of Taiyo Fishery Co.; and Eichi Hahashi, of Nippon Suisan Co.

Also attending will be Hugh Takagi, the Washington, D.C.-based representative of the Japanese Fisheries Association.

The new plant will be American-owned, Breaux said. Its location has yet to be determined.

The congressman said the plant will mean Louisianans “will be able to say to the foreign countries that we’re going to catch the fish. We’re going to package them. We’re going to put them in a box, and we’re going to market them from here.”

Seafood to be processed in Plaquemines will include the traditional catch, such as shrimp and oysters, he said. But non-traditional seafood like butterfish also will be processed for export, Breaux said.

“Louisiana is the largest producer of fish in North America, but half of the fish in the Gulf we give away — we throw back overboard,” the lawmaker said.

Breaux, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment, said the Japanese are coming to Plaquemines Parish at his invitation following discussions with him and his staff.

Rep. Breaux told of plans for the seafood processing plant during a luncheon speech to the Independent Women’s Organization that met Tuesday at Delmonico Restaurant, 1300 St. Charles Ave.

Breaux is running for the U.S. Senate seat now held by Russell B. Long, D-La., who plans to retire.

Also in the race are U.S. Rep. W. Henson Moore, R-Baton Rouge, and state Insurance Commissioner Sherman A. Bernard, a Democrat.

During his speech, Breaux predicted he would win the election.

“If feel that the momentum is there,” he said. “And it should be there. The registration in this state is almost 80-20 Democratic registration.”

Breaux charged that Moore has been ducking him during the campaign.

“My opponent has canceled three scheduled debates since our first debate that we had in Shreveport,” Breaux said.

“He canceled the debate in Lake Charles before the League of Women Voters. He canceled the debate back in Shreveport before a Junior League. He canceled a debate at the University of Southwestern.”

Noting that the Republicans hold only a narrow majority in the Senate, Breaux said: “The decision you make... is going to affect this country because the balance of power in the United States Senate is at stake.

“Louisiana has a lot of problems,” the congressman said. “I think that those problems, in a large degree, are clearly caused by Republican policies that are being formulated in Washington that are hurting us in Louisiana.

“I think, clearly, the Republican energy policy that’s coming out of Washington is hurting us here in Louisiana,” said Breaux, of Crowley, who represents the 7th Congressional District.

“The administration believes in free trade, is quite happy to let the OPEC nations continue to dump their cheap oil onto Louisiana and into this country, to make us more and more dependent on the Middle Eastern states for our oil,” he said.

Breaux said the administration does not want to put an import fee on oil and is content to let the free marketplace work the problem out.

“Who in the world thinks that OPEC is a free market?” he asked. “OPEC is a cartel. OPEC is formed to do one thing, and that’s to fix prices.

“They are putting our banks out of business that make energy loans,” Breaux said. “They are putting our service companies out of business.”

Referring to Moore’s amply funded Senate campaign, Breaux said: “This is not an auction. It’s an election.”

Breaux said he rejects the notion that a Senate seat can be bought. He said the campaign should be based on ideas, debate and public participation — not on who can buy the most 30-second advertising spots on television.

“I can’t win if that’s what the ball game is going to be all about,” Breaux said. “If we win, it’s going to be a people win. It’s not going to be a dollar win.”