Proclaiming March 2, 2019, as Alaska Reads Day.

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BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS the ability of citizens to read is recognized as a basic requirement for the viability of a democratic society; and

WHEREAS an educated public is essential to the development of the state's economy because a skilled and diverse workforce spurs economic activity and attracts revenue to the state; and

WHEREAS well-read citizens and successful students aid our country in successfully conducting foreign affairs, maintaining military and diplomatic roles, and maintaining national security; and

WHEREAS the state has chronically low proficiency rates for its students, and, according to several national measures, the state's proficiency rate was stagnant at 27 percent from 2005 to 2013, and only 30 percent of the state's fourth grade students were proficient readers in 2016; and

WHEREAS the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that, in 2015, Alaska was second to last in fourth grade reading proficiency, which means that the state's
fourth graders, and our students in general, are at a greater academic disadvantage than students in most other states; and

WHEREAS students who do not read proficiently by the third grade are likely to fall behind in all other subjects, which makes the development of reading proficiency before the third grade vital to academic success overall; and

WHEREAS students who are not proficient readers in the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of school and to generate increased social services and incarceration costs for the state; and

WHEREAS reading proficiency begins at birth, and greater exposure to words in the home is directly related to better readers and better students; and

WHEREAS reading out loud to children increases their interest in mastering reading, exposes children to proper vocabulary, grammar, and phrasing, and enhances the development of their own reading skills; and

WHEREAS it is important that state policy leaders, business and community leaders, educators, parents, and all citizens of the state increase the emphasis they place on education and the fundamental skill of reading; and

WHEREAS private and public organizations and agencies, as well as private citizens and public officials, can participate in showing the state's students that their academic success and reading ability are important to the economy, stability, and prosperity of the state; and

WHEREAS participants from public and private sectors can participate in reading to children in public schools, private schools, libraries, and other appropriate community facilities; and

WHEREAS a campaign to make the public aware of the importance of mastering the fundamental skill of reading can be implemented through private and public partnerships and does not need public funding at this time; and

WHEREAS an Alaska Reads Day would foster a love of reading and encourage the young people of the state and all citizens of the state to explore the world of books, and would raise awareness of the importance of reading in our young children; and

WHEREAS Theodor Seuss Geisel, whose pen name was Dr. Seuss, inspired a love of reading and phonics in countless young persons of this country; and

WHEREAS March 2, 2016, was proclaimed Read Across America Day to coincide
BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature proclaims March 2, 2019, as Alaska Reads Day; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature requests that public and private citizens and organizations of the state work together on March 2, 2019, to raise awareness among the students and citizens of the state of the importance of reading to young children and the importance of independent reading.