TO: The Alaska State Legislature  
FROM: Alaskans concerned about climate change  

May 3, 2017

Dear AK Legislator,

We, the undersigned urge you to support HB173\(^1\), establishing a Climate Change Response Commission through a surcharge on oil produced in Alaska.

**Climate change is impacting Alaska profoundly and at an alarming rate.** Rising temperatures twice exceeding lower latitudes\(^2\) are triggering cascading effects\(^3\), including large scale coastal flooding and erosion, permafrost melt, the dramatic retreat of glacial and sea ice, ocean acidification and marked increases in the scale, frequency and intensity of wildfires. Other impacts include an increase in toxic algae blooms, shifting fisheries, the invasive of new species and the landscape scale redistribution of biodiversity\(^4\) leading to significant ecological changes. Cumulatively, these effects are threatening Alaska’s public health, subsistence life-ways, infrastructure and economy.

**Alaskans know climate change\(^5\).** We have deep connections to the land and sea that extend back many generations. While we are accustomed to the vagaries of extreme seasonal weather patterns and natural fluctuations, the changes Alaskans now see are unprecedented even in the oral history of Alaska Natives\(^6\).

**The trends are not encouraging.** Every year since 2014 has been record-breaking. This fall temperatures soared 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit) above normal across large stretches of the Arctic Ocean\(^7\). At least 14 communities around the state recorded their highest average temperatures ever\(^8\).

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http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/30?Root=HB%20173


\(^3\) Kazmierczak, Jeanette. In Alaska’s ‘last frontier,’ climate change provides new horizons for invasive species. NASA Global Climate Change, July 7, 2015.  

\(^4\) Welch, Craig. Half of All Species Are on the Move – And We’re Feeling It. *National Geographic.* April 27, 2017.  
DOI: 10.1126/science.aai9214.  

\(^5\) Alaskans Know Climate Change Project:  
http://www.alaskansknowclimatechange.com/index.html

https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol17/iss1/art10/

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/nov/22/extraordinarily-hot-arctic-temperatures-alarm-scientists

http://www.ktuu.com/content/news/2016--409402135.html
The failure to act on climate change is hurting Alaskans. Below are some, but certainly not all of the ways climate change is affecting our people, communities and environment:

- Nearly 15 years ago the General Accounting Office reported that flooding and coastal erosion threatens 184 out of 213 or 86% of Alaska’s Native villages. Kivalina, Koyukuk, Newtok and Shishmaref are in “imminent danger” and still, no action has been taken.

- Glaciers across Alaska are melting and reducing in mass, including Eklutna glacier that provides municipal water and hydropower for our most populous city, Anchorage. Recent studies predict that Eklutna could disappear this century or sooner.

- Arctic sea ice reached a record minimum for the third straight year and the lowest maximum in the 38-year satellite record, on March 7th of this year. Increased wind and waves, thinning ice, Polar bear behavior changes and increased shipping activity are having profound effects on Alaska’s coastal communities.

- Warmer, more acidic, less oxygen-rich waters along the West Coast have increased the occurrence of harmful algal blooms, affecting shellfish harvests and possibly causing the largest marine-mammal and seabird mortality events ever recorded in the state.

- A marked increase in the frequency, intensity and scale of wildfires. More than 5 million acres burned in 2015, destroying a main buffer against climate change: the carbon-rich boreal forests, tundra and permafrost that serve as vital carbon sinks.

- Significant infrastructure (building, airport, railroad and pipeline) damage from near-surface permafrost thaw that could cost the state $5.5 billion this century.

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Hundreds of thousands of caribou, musk ox, moose and ice seals perished when unseasonal rain-on-snow locked browse beneath a layer of ice and destroyed snowy nursery lairs needed for survival.\(^{16}\)

**The evidence is clear and overwhelming** and the time for action is *now*.

HB 173 will restart the important work of the State in addressing climate change, financed appropriately by the industry that has benefitted the most from its cause: the production and burning of fossil fuel.\(^{17}\)

Given the scale and intensity of impacts, the small $0.02 surcharge per barrel of oil produced on State lands proposed by HB173, while an important start, isn’t sufficient to support the work that is needed to fully address climate change issues in Alaska. We urge you to make the following amendments:

1. Direct the Commission to prepare a comprehensive Alaska Climate Change Adaptation Plan and detailed implementation timeline within 2 years,
2. Expand Commission representation to include three NGO representatives with expertise in climate change and one member each from Fairbanks Borough, Denali Borough, Southeast Fairbanks census area and Yukon-Koyukuk census area,
3. Convene an annual statewide conference on climate change co-organized with Alaskan NGOs working on climate and energy issues and open to members of the public,
4. Increase the per barrel surcharge to $0.50 in ensure that the Commission has the capacity to fulfill its directives. The proposed $0.02 surcharge is wholly insufficient.

State action on climate change is long overdue. HB173 is a small, but extremely necessary step to head off enormous impacts to all sectors of Alaska’s economy. If we act decisively now, Alaska can not only avert the worst case scenarios, we can spark innovation across the state and drive a new energy transition that paves the way to a sustainable future for Alaskans.

We urge you to support, strengthen, expand and build on this important legislation, posthaste.

Sincerely,

1. Ceal Smith, Chair, AK Climate Caucus/Founder, AK Climate & Energy Action Network (AK CLEAN), Eagle River, AK 99577
2. Bjorn Olsen, Alaskans Know Climate Change Education Campaign, Kachemak Bay Conservation Society, Homer, AK. *For a state warming more than twice as fast as the rest of the US, it seems entirely unreasonable to not have a branch of government following, studying, and advising on climate change.*
3. Mark Gutman, Chukchi Sea Watch, Talkeetna, AK 99676
4. Danielle Redman, Renewable Juneau, Juneau, AK
5. Tristan Glowa, Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, Fairbanks, AK
6. Eric Schaetzle, AK CLEAN/Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, Fairbanks, AK 99708

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\(^{16}\) Rosen, Yereth. Rain on snow takes a toll on wildlife and the natural environment in the far north.  

\(^{17}\) Causes of Climate Change, Climate Change Science, US Environmental Protection Agency website: [https://www.epa.gov/climate-change-science/causes-climate-change](https://www.epa.gov/climate-change-science/causes-climate-change)
7. Kerry Williams, Vice Chair, Alaska Climate Caucus/AK CLEAN, Eagle River, AK
8. Princess Lucaj, Fairbanks, AK
9. Callan Chythlook Sifsook, Girdwood, AK 99587
10. Martha Itta, Tribal Administrator, Native Village of Nuiqsut, AK
11. Wilson Justin, AK Climate Caucus, Chistochina, AK 99586
12. Kendra Zamzow, Chickaloon, AK 99674 Governor Walker should directly appoint a science-policy advisor with strong understanding of the drivers and impacts of climate change on Alaska to be an official advisor to him within the office of the Governor. I support HB173 as an addition to a Governor's advisor.
13. Margaret Stock, Attorney, Cascadia Cross Border Law Group, Anchorage, AK
14. Brent Watkins, Vice Chair Alaska Democrats, member DNC, AK Climate Caucus, Kodiak, AK 99615
15. D’Arcy Hutchings, AK Climate Caucus, Anchorage, AK 99508
16. Pamela Miller, Ex Director, Alaska Community Action on Toxics, Anchorage, AK 99508
17. Libby Roderick, Turtle Island Records, Anchorage, AK 99508
18. Caroline Cannon, AK CLEAN, Point Hope, AK
19. Nick Moe, Spenard, AK 99503
20. Rev. Dr. Curtis Karns, Presbytery of Yukon, Eagle River, AK 99577
21. Vick Briggs, Alaska Food Policy Council, King Salmon, AK 99613
22. Cynthia Wentworth, Passenger Rail for Commuters, Anchorage, AK 99540
23. Alyson Pytte, 49 Moons, Anchorage, AK
24. Malinda Chase, AK CLEAN, Fairbanks, AK 99708
25. Shoshanah Stone, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
26. Susan Sommer, Alaskans Stronger Together, Palmer, AK
27. Cameron Cowles, Our Revolution Alaska, AK
28. Joshua Spring, AK Climate Caucus, Alaska Young Dem Volunteer Corp, Anchorage, AK
29. Pete LaFrance, Palmer City Council, Palmer, AK 99645
30. Stephen Greenlaw, Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, Fairbanks, AK 99708
31. Cindee Karnes, Cold Climate Permaculture, Eagle River, AK 99577
32. Brandon Nakasato, AK Climate Caucus, Anchorage, AK
33. Dave Musgrave, Indivisible Alaska, Palmer, AK
34. Chase Stoudt, Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, Fairbanks, AK 99708
35. Kate Smith-Utley, AK Climate Caucus, Fairbanks, AK 99708
36. Patricia Rivera, Institute of Marine Science, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, AK 99709
37. Susan Todd, AK Climate Caucus, Fairbanks, AK 99709
38. Deirdre Coval, AK Climate Caucus, Soldotna, AK
39. Scott Maxwell, AK Climate Caucus, Anchorage, AK
40. Dave Scott, AK CLEAN, AK Climate Caucus, Auke Bay, AK
41. Ed Wesley, Anchorage, AK 99501
42. Derek Reed, Anchorage Democrats President, AK Climate Caucus, Anchorage, AK 99504
43. Elizabeth Manning, 907 Hub, Anchorage, AK 99501
44. Kevin D. McGee, NAACP, Anchorage, AK 99504. "We have but one earth, stop the rush to destroy it"
45. Sally Russell Cox, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
46. Kathleen Menke, AK CLEAN, Haines, AK 99827
47. Alfredo Bolivar, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
48. Katie Kennedy, Save the Kenai, Ninilchik, AK 99639. Given the accelerated rate of methane gas from melting permafrost, loss of ice fields and glaciers, it makes sense for Alaska to be a leading scientific state on climate change. We need to stop extraction of fossil fuels to achieve this goal and be leaders on the most important topic of our time.
49. Amy Christiansen, AK CLEAN, Homer, AK
50. Cyndy Earnshaw, AK CLEAN, Eagle River, AK 99577
51. McKibben Jackinsky, AK CLEAN, Homer, AK 99603
52. Robin Solfsburg, Take Action Skagway, Skagway, AK
53. Philip-Robin Clark, Take Action Skagway, Skagway, AK
54. Judy Williams, March on Alaska, Eagle River, AK
55. Chris Prussing, AK CLEAN, Juneau, AK
56. Donna Marie, Alaskans Stronger Together/Indivisible Alaska, Wasilla, AK 99654
57. Lila Vogt, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99517 Lifetime Alaskan
58. Lydia Darby, Anchorage, AK 99503
59. Oliver Schiess, AK Climate Caucus, Eagle River, AK 99577
60. Constance Fredenberg, Palmer, AK
61. Andria Bond, AK CLEAN, Salcha, AK
62. Jill Missal, Anchorage, AK
63. Stacy Koster, Wasilla, AK
64. Suzanne McCausland, AK. Climate change is threatening our children, and grandchildren. We must take responsibility and action now.
65. April Wisebaker, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage, AK
66. Christina Peterson, Fairbanks, AK. I'd like to see us pursue an industry for Climate study in Alaska, as well as renewable and independent energy production.
67. Cheryl Lovegreen, Indivisible Alaska, Anchorage, AK
68. Anke Kelly, Indivisible Alaska, Anchorage, AK
69. Chandra McGee, Indivisible Alaska, Fairbanks, AK
70. Anne Green, Indivisible Alaska, Anchorage, AK
71. Amy Dalton, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage, AK
72. Amy Jackson, Concerned Citizen, Kenai, AK 99611
73. Wendy Alward, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99508
74. David Cheezem, Co-owner Fireside Books, Palmer, AK
75. Chelsea Vukovich, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage, AK
76. Barbara McDaniel, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
77. Leanna Heffner, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
78. Bhree Roumagoux, 907 Hub, Anchorage, AK
79. Sonja Barnard, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99507
80. Tracy Anna Bader, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99515
81. Tyler Fox, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99577
82. Rosemary Reynolds, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99515
83. Courtney Brown, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99508
84. Alex Lopez, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99505
85. Lesa Hollen, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99505
86. Patrick Hanson, AK Standing Up, Gustavus, AK 99826
87. Tricia Elliott, Indivisible Alaska, Anchorage, AK 99516
88. Sandra Calvillo, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99504
89. Barbara Johnson, Indivisible Alaska, Chugiak, AK 99567
90. Dana Markey, Alaskan Native, MS 64040
91. Judy Macnak, Renewable Juneau, Juneau, AK 99801
92. Michelle Schmidt, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage 99502
93. Stacey Fritz, AK CLEAN, Fairbanks, AK
94. Denise Atwood, Alaskans Stronger Together, Seward, AK 99664
95. Simon Vansintjian, Take Action Skagway, Skagway, AK 99840
96. Donna Braendel, AK CLEAN, Chickaloon, AK 99674
It's important to fund good evidence-based climate practices. Please support this initiative!
It is irresponsible and unforgivable to ignore something as critical as climate change. We see the impact in Alaska first-hand. We need to act now.

Our environment is degrading on a daily basis. We see the signs as clearly as our own faces. We have to put our environment and climate as a top priority. Ignoring the facts doesn’t change them. We have to take action now -- it’s already past a point of return in some areas. When will we do what's right instead of what's easy or not profitable? We are the stewards of this planet and it's time we remember that our children and grandchildren will bare the brunt of our lack of action. What will we tell them when they look to us for answers? We didn't know? We didn't care! Or it was too hard? Do what's right and protect our planet. Support HB 173.

Concerned about climate change.

Submitted on May 3, 2017. We will continue to gather signatures and submit periodic updates to the governor and legislature until HB173, or preferably a stronger bill, is successfully adopted.

Submitted to the following committee chairs and co-chairs:

House State Affairs Committee
Chair, Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Representative Jonathan.Kreiss-Tomkins@akleg.gov, 907-465-3732
Vice-Chair, Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux, Representative.Gabrielle.LeDoux@akleg.gov, 907-465-4998

**House Resources Committee**
Chair, Rep. Andy Josephson (sponsor), Representative.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov, 907-465-4939
Co-Chair, Rep. Geran Tarr (co-sponsor), Representative.Geran.Tarr@akleg.gov, 907-465-3424

**House Finance Committee**
Co-Chair, Rep. Neal Foster, Representative.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov, 907-465-3789
Vice-Chair, Rep. Les Gara, Representative.Les.Gara@akleg.gov, 907-465-2647