

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Sponsor Statement

House Joint Resolution 16 – Relating to National Ocean Policy

House Joint Resolution 16 urges an Alaska exemption from a forthcoming and far-reaching federal policy to manage and zone activities in marine and coastal areas.

President Obama created the National Ocean Council (NOC) in 2010 by executive fiat and gave it broad authority to create a national policy that would, among other things, “ensure the protection, maintenance, and restoration of the health of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems and resources” and “respond to climate change and ocean acidification.”

A key part of that national ocean policy (NOP) is the development of coastal and marine spatial plans (CSMP). This federal ocean-use planning or “zoning” would prescribe what, where, and when certain activities are allowed – not only in our marine and coastal areas but also on wetlands and waterways located far inland of our coasts and oceans. The list of activities subject to regulation under both the NOP and the CMSP would prospectively include oil, gas, and renewable energy development, fishing, mining, timber, transportation, and tourism.

While highly populated areas of the Lower 48 – where user conflicts over scarce resources are well-demonstrated – might benefit from a federally driven ocean policy and zoning plan, in Alaska there is neither a proven scarcity of resources nor a demonstrated level of user conflict that would warrant the increased bureaucratic burden and government imposition these federal policies presage.

The NOC released its National Ocean Policy Draft Implementation Plan in January of 2012, with the stated intent of releasing a final implementation plan in spring of 2012. The final plan is a year overdue and likely nearing completion. Now is the time for the Legislature to urge an Alaska exemption to a NOP and CSMP or, at a minimum, to ask for voluntary state-by-state participation in these federal policies.

I urge you to help ensure Alaska maintains control over activities on our oceans, coasts, and waterways and to minimize federal overreach by supporting HJR 16.