

Representative Bob Herron

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House District 38

Kuskokwim & Johnson Rivers

Kuskokwim Bay & Nelson Island

Akiachak

Akiak

Atmautluak

Bethel

Chefornak

Eek

Goodnews Bay

Kasigluk

Kipnuk

Kongiganak

Kwethluk

Kwigillingok

Lower Kalskag

Mekoryuk

Mertarvik

Napakiak

Napaskiak

Newtok

Nightmute

Nunapitchuk

Oscarville

Platinum

Quinhagak

Toksook Bay

Tululsak

Tununak

Tuntutuliak

Upper Kalskag

HJR 34 – Coast Guard Icebreakers & Arctic Base

SPONSOR STATEMENT

The Alaska Northern Waters Task Force's Final Report was released January 30, 2012. HJR 34 formalizes two of the Task Force's recommendations and calls for the United States to:

1. Forward base the US Coast Guard in the Arctic, and
2. Fund icebreakers and other ice capable vessels.

The entire Arctic region is experiencing increased human activity related to shipping, oil and gas development, commercial fishing, and tourism and this increased activity leads to a commensurate need for immediate investment in the United States Arctic to enable the responsible development of resources; foster maritime commerce, safeguard the well-being of Arctic residents and ecosystems; facilitate emergency and disaster preparedness and response; and protect United States sovereignty.

The Coast Guard's mission in the Arctic is broad and it's becoming increasingly clear that the Coast Guard lacks the necessary assets to adequately complete its mission – without a corresponding increase in Arctic investment by the United States, this deficiency will only worsen over time. Having a sufficient number of ice-capable vessels (including shallow-draft vessels with icebreaking capability) is vital for the Coast Guard to fulfill its expanding mission in the Arctic.

Congress and the Administration are mandated by multiple laws and policies to maintain icebreaking operations, including:

- A 1936 Executive Order from President Franklin Roosevelt
- The Arctic Research Policy Act of 1984
- The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010, and
- The 2011 Arctic Search & Rescue (SAR) Agreement

Should a tragedy – such as the recent wreck of the cruise ship *Costa Concordia* in Italy – occur in the Arctic, the Coast Guard would be hard pressed to respond with sufficient assets in a timely fashion given their single Polar Class Icebreaker and their nearest base being in Kodiak, over 900 miles away from Alaska's Arctic coast.

Other countries fully understand the need for more Icebreakers in the Arctic:

- Russia has a fleet of eight nuclear powered icebreakers;
- Canada has committed \$38 billion to a 30-year plan to build additional icebreakers and other ice-strengthened ships;
- Sweden, Finland, South Korea, and Japan have recently added icebreakers to their fleets; and
- China has a large icebreaking research ship and will have a second vessel operational in 2013

Considering it will take from seven to ten years to design and construct just one new Polar Class icebreaker, it is time critical that the U.S. fund & construct additional Icebreakers. Delay on this action will inevitably lead to undesirable consequences for the United States in the Arctic.

The Coast Guard must have a greater overall presence in the Arctic, with the ability to stage assets closer to future shipping, oil and gas drilling, and commercial fishing activities. I urge your support for this resolution.