

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Concurrent Resolution 22

“Establishing the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission”

Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 22 establishes the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission. The mission of the 16-member commission will be to engage state government on northern waters issues and place Alaska at the forefront of the nation’s Arctic policy. The resolution continues the legislature’s work to create an Arctic policy for the State of Alaska, and provides for a two-year public process to involving communities, stakeholders, and policymakers.

In anticipation of a changing Arctic, most northern nations and territories already have established Arctic policies to address changes and developments in northern shipping routes, mineral extraction, oil and gas exploration, commercial fisheries, and tourism. As a state with an enormous stake in the Arctic, and as the jurisdiction that makes the United States an Arctic nation, the State of Alaska needs to do the same.

In January 2012 the Alaska Northern Waters Task Force (ANWTF) presented its findings to the legislature. The task force identified opportunities and challenges in a changing Arctic, and made recommendations in six policy areas: Governance, Oil and Gas Development, Marine Transportation, Fisheries, Infrastructure, and Research.

The ANWTF Report is the most detailed assessment of Arctic issues by the legislature, but more work is needed to fully assess the multitude of issues brought forward by the task force and craft an official Arctic policy for Alaska.

To this end, SCR 22 creates in the legislative branch an Alaska Arctic Policy Commission. The 16-member commission would include:

- 3 Senators appointed by the Senate President (one as Co-Chair)
- 3 Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House (one as Co-Chair)
- 1 Executive Branch Representative appointed by the Governor
- 9 members appointed jointly by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House representing:
 - Federal Government
 - Tribal Entity
 - Mining Industry
 - Oil & Gas Industry
 - University of Alaska
 - Fisheries
 - Local Government
 - Coastal Community
 - International Arctic Organization

Over the course of two years, the commission would hold hearings statewide and provide preliminary recommendations by January 30, 2014 and a final report by January 30, 2015.