

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVE MUÑOZ

Introduced: 1/24/11

Referred: Health and Social Services

A RESOLUTION

1 **Relating to promoting the safety and protection of older Alaskans.**

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

3 **WHEREAS**, as valued residents of the state who enrich our communities and
4 personal lives, older Alaskans deserve to live in a safe and dignified manner, enjoying as
5 much independence as possible; and

6 **WHEREAS** the interests of the state are served by decreasing risks of older Alaskans
7 suffering from neglect, physical or emotional abuse, abandonment, financial exploitation, and
8 of harming themselves; and

9 **WHEREAS** it is estimated that 52,263 Alaskans, or 7.5 percent of the population of
10 the state, are 65 years of age or older; and

11 **WHEREAS** the number of older Alaskans is increasing, as "baby boomers" born
12 between 1946 and 1964 reach traditional retirement age, highlighting the need for expanded
13 protections for older Alaskans; and

14 **WHEREAS** older Alaskans who are isolated, particularly those with Alzheimer's
15 disease and related dementia and other complex health needs, may be targets of abuse; and

16 **WHEREAS** elder abuse perpetrated by family members, friends, caregivers, and

1 opportunistic strangers occurs in families and communities across the state without regard to
2 socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and ethnic distinctions; and

3 **WHEREAS** the devastating problem of elder abuse often goes unreported because
4 victims fear shame and isolation will result from reporting abuse; and

5 **WHEREAS** an estimated 11 percent of people living in the United States who are 60
6 years of age or older suffer from some form of abuse; and

7 **WHEREAS** elder abuse in the state is increasing at an alarming rate; and

8 **WHEREAS** state agencies, including adult protective services in the Department of
9 Health and Social Services, the office of the long-term care ombudsman in the Department of
10 Revenue, and the office of elder fraud and assistance in the Department of Administration, as
11 well as services provided by the Department of Public Safety are devoted to the protection of
12 older Alaskans; and

13 **WHEREAS** the number of reports of harm filed with adult protective services has
14 risen by 169 percent in the past four years; and

15 **WHEREAS** the most common allegations contained in reports of harm filed with
16 adult protective services were related to self-neglect and financial exploitation; and

17 **WHEREAS** the number of reports of harm filed with the office of the long-term care
18 ombudsman has risen by 200 percent in the past three years; and

19 **WHEREAS** the most common allegations contained in reports of harm filed with the
20 office of the long-term care ombudsman were related to abuse and gross neglect in assisted
21 living facilities; and

22 **WHEREAS** the protection of older Alaskans is a societal responsibility that requires
23 communities and agencies across the state to work together to help reduce and prevent abuse,
24 neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation;

25 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature

26 (1) recognizes the need to protect vulnerable older Alaskans from any act that
27 harms or jeopardizes an older Alaskan's health or welfare;

28 (2) supports the governor's efforts to improve safety for older Alaskans
29 through state agencies, including adult protective services, the office of the long-term care
30 ombudsman, the office of elder fraud and assistance, the services of the Department of Public
31 Safety, and the Medicaid fraud control unit in the office of the attorney general;

1 (3) encourages the Department of Health and Social Services and the office of
2 the long-term care ombudsman to promote public education and awareness to increase public
3 recognition and reporting of elder abuse;

4 (4) supports efforts by the Department of Health and Social Services to
5 improve interagency coordination of first responders and service providers through ongoing
6 communication and planning; and

7 (5) supports efficient prevention and early intervention services provided by
8 senior nutrition and outreach programs, volunteer long-term care ombudsmen, adult
9 protective services, and aging and disability resource centers, which reduce the incidence of
10 harm to older Alaskans.