

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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HCR 23 – Establishing the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Sponsor Statement

The Alaska Northern Waters Task Force (ANWTF) was established in 2010 to identify the opportunities and challenges of a changing Arctic. Arctic Nations are anticipating the development of northern shipping routes, mineral extraction, oil and gas exploration, commercial fisheries, and tourism. Some of this change has already started to occur. The ANWT completed its final report on January 30, 2012. The report includes recommendations in six Arctic policy areas: Governance, Oil & Gas Development, Marine Transportation, Fisheries, Infrastructure, and Research. The report is by far the broadest and most detailed statement of Alaska's Arctic policy to date, yet much work remains to fully expound upon all the diverse issues that the Task Force brought forward.

While the United States has an official written Arctic Policy (National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD)-66), Alaska does not. Most of the other Arctic Nations and the Northwest Territories already have established Arctic policies. As the jurisdiction that makes the United States an Arctic nation and as the only U.S. state that is home to Arctic residents, Alaska needs an Arctic policy of its own. Alaska needs to position itself now regarding the nation's Arctic policy – Alaska cannot take that leadership role without understanding what its own priorities should be. This is especially critical considering the United States will be chairing the Arctic Council from 2015-2017. The Arctic Policy Commission will provide the legislature an opportunity to remain engaged in the ongoing Arctic dialogue and to help shape future Alaskan Arctic policy.

Toward this end, HCR 23 creates in the legislative branch an Alaska Arctic Policy Commission. The 16-member Commission would include:

- 3 senators appointed by the Senate President (one acting as Co-Chair)
- 3 representatives appointed by the House Speaker (one acting as Co-Chair)
- 1 member from the executive branch appointed by the Governor
- 9 members appointed jointly by the President and the Speaker representing:
 - The federal government
 - A tribal entity
 - The mining industry
 - The oil & gas industry
 - The University of Alaska
 - Fisheries
 - A local government
 - A coastal community
 - An international Arctic organization

Over the course of two years, the Alaska Policy Commission will hold meetings in Arctic areas of the state as well as Anchorage and Fairbanks. The Commission is tasked with providing preliminary recommendations on Alaska's Arctic policy by January 30, 2014 and delivering a final report by January 30, 2015.