

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## Representative Bob Herron

Official Business



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### House Joint Resolution 30 – Izembek Land Exchange

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#### SPONSOR STATEMENT

King Cove, a first class city in the Aleutians East Borough, is a village of 950 residents. It is a wonderful place to live, but comes with a major challenge; King Cove residents lack reliable access to air transportation - the timely, lifesaving link they need in medical emergency situations. Currently, residents connect with the outside world by marine transport to neighboring Cold Bay, from whose airport they can access care in appropriate facilities – but this method is both expensive and unreliable.

Five years ago, the United States Congress passed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, authorizing an “Izembek Land Exchange” to provide for the road. In this proposed exchange, the State of Alaska and King Cove Corporation would transfer over 61,000 acres to the federal government, in exchange for a mere 206 acres and a small parcel on Sitanuk Island, through which to construct a modest one-lane gravel access road between King Cove and Cold Bay. The proposed road is anticipated to see use by only 15 to 20 vehicles daily, but the access it provides will save lives.

In 2010, the Alaska State Legislature unanimously supported House Bill 210, approving the state’s participation in the exchange.

In March 2013, at the end of a troubled multi-year Environmental Impact Statement process, then U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar rejected the exchange. On December 23, 2013, after personally travelling to King Cove and meeting with residents, current Secretary Sally Jewell upheld that rejection.

This treatment is wrong for King Cove, and it is wrong for Alaska.

HJR 30 demonstrates our support for King Cove, urging Secretary Jewell to:

- 1) reconsider the Izembek Land Exchange decision, based on technical and procedural deficiencies in the EIS process; and
- 2) approve the Izembek Land Exchange, King Cove residents to have modest road access to the Cold Bay airport, which is critical to residents’ health and life safety.

Please join me in support of HJR 30.