

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 7

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON

Introduced: 1/21/15

Referred:

A RESOLUTION

1 **Opposing the proposed designation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary.**

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

3 **WHEREAS**, in June 2014, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
4 reestablished the process by which communities may submit applications to have the National
5 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration consider nominations of areas of the marine and
6 Great Lakes environments as national marine sanctuaries; and

7 **WHEREAS** the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has stated that
8 "every nomination starts at the community level"; and

9 **WHEREAS**, while the Sanctuary Nomination Process Guide published by the
10 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration calls for "community-based support for
11 the nomination," it also includes a definition of "communities" that is so broad it is essentially
12 meaningless; and

13 **WHEREAS** a collection of predominantly non-Alaska organizations led by the
14 Washington, D.C., based Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility has nominated
15 an area of approximately 554,000 square nautical miles--nearly equal to the entire landmass
16 of the state--to be designated as the Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary; and

1 **WHEREAS** the designation of the proposed Aleutian Islands National Marine
2 Sanctuary would make permanent all current restrictions on fishing and other commerce and
3 would potentially authorize additional permanent restrictions that would prove burdensome to
4 present and future economic activity in the region; and

5 **WHEREAS** concerns noted in the nomination have been and are currently being
6 vigorously addressed through a variety of institutions and measures; and

7 **WHEREAS** 277,100 square nautical miles of the Aleutian Islands are already
8 designated as a habitat conservation area; and

9 **WHEREAS** fishing in the region has long been under the conscientious, effective
10 stewardship of local residents, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Alaska
11 Board of Fisheries, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Alaska Department of Fish
12 and Game; and

13 **WHEREAS** the Aleutian Islands are subject to the North Pacific Fishery Management
14 Council's Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan, which provides for heightened scientific
15 scrutiny to assess and enrich the health of the ecosystem, the sustainability of fisheries, and
16 the well-being of communities in the region; and

17 **WHEREAS** risks associated with shipping are being addressed through the ongoing
18 Aleutian Islands Risk Assessment, which includes the development of the Optimal Response
19 System to increase towing, salvage, and spill response capabilities in the region; and

20 **WHEREAS**, in December 2014, President Obama withdrew the 32,500,000-acre
21 North Aleutian Basin Planning Area from oil and gas leasing, and, in any case, oil and gas
22 development in the region is not feasible in the foreseeable future; and

23 **WHEREAS** strong Environmental Protection Agency regulations are already in place
24 to address potential issues involving invasive species; and

25 **WHEREAS**, at this time, the legislature is unaware of any support from local
26 communities, local tribes, or other local groups for this nomination; and

27 **WHEREAS**, in the wake of the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
28 nomination, the Aleutians East Borough Assembly, the federally recognized Agdaagux Tribe
29 of King Cove, and the Akutan Traditional Council have published official declarations of
30 their strong opposition to the creation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary;

31 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature is vehemently opposed to the

1 nomination by the Washington, D.C., based Public Employees for Environmental
2 Responsibility for the creation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

3 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Penny Pritzker, United
4 States Secretary of Commerce; the Honorable Kathryn Sullivan, Ph.D., Under Secretary of
5 Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and National Oceanic and Atmospheric
6 Administration Administrator; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan
7 Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the
8 Alaska delegation in Congress.