

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 5
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATOR GARDNER

Introduced: 2/24/17

Referred: Education, State Affairs

A RESOLUTION

1 **Proclaiming March 2, 2018, as Alaska Reads Day.**

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

3 **WHEREAS** the ability of citizens to read is recognized as a basic requirement for the
4 viability of a democratic society; and

5 **WHEREAS** an educated public is essential to the development of the state's economy
6 because a skilled and diverse workforce spurs economic activity and attracts revenue to the
7 state; and

8 **WHEREAS** well-read citizens and successful students aid our country in successfully
9 conducting foreign affairs, maintaining military and diplomatic roles, and maintaining
10 national security; and

11 **WHEREAS** the state has chronically low proficiency rates for its students, and,
12 according to several national measures, the state's proficiency rate was stagnant at 27 percent
13 from 2005 to 2013, and only 30 percent of the state's fourth grade students were proficient
14 readers in 2016; and

15 **WHEREAS** the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that in 2015 Alaska
16 was second to last in fourth grade reading proficiency, which means that the state's fourth

1 graders, and our students in general, are at a greater academic disadvantage than students in
2 most other states; and

3 **WHEREAS** students who do not read proficiently by the third grade are likely to fall
4 behind in all other subjects, which makes the development of reading proficiency before the
5 third grade vital to academic success overall; and

6 **WHEREAS** students who are not proficient readers in the third grade are four times
7 more likely to drop out of school and to generate increased social services and incarceration
8 costs for the state; and

9 **WHEREAS** reading proficiency begins at birth, and greater exposure to words in the
10 home is directly related to better readers and better students; and

11 **WHEREAS** reading out loud to children increases their interest in mastering reading,
12 exposes children to proper vocabulary, grammar, and phrasing, and enhances the development
13 of their own reading skills; and

14 **WHEREAS** it is important that state policy leaders, business and community leaders,
15 educators, parents, and all citizens of the state increase the emphasis they place on education
16 and the fundamental skill of reading; and

17 **WHEREAS** private and public organizations and agencies, as well as private citizens
18 and public officials, can participate in showing the state's students that their academic success
19 and reading ability are important to the economy, stability, and prosperity of the state; and

20 **WHEREAS** participants from public and private sectors can participate in reading to
21 children in public schools, private schools, libraries, and other appropriate community
22 facilities; and

23 **WHEREAS** a campaign to make the public aware of the importance of mastering the
24 fundamental skill of reading can be implemented through private and public partnerships and
25 does not need public funding at this time; and

26 **WHEREAS** an Alaska Reads Day would foster a love of reading and encourage the
27 young people of the state and all citizens of the state to explore the world of books, and would
28 raise awareness of the importance of reading in our young children; and

29 **WHEREAS** Theodor Seuss Geisel, whose pen name was Dr. Seuss, inspired a love of
30 reading and phonics in countless young persons of this country; and

31 **WHEREAS** March 2, 2016, was proclaimed Read Across America Day to coincide

1 with Dr. Seuss's birthday;

2 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature proclaims March 2, 2018, as
3 Alaska Reads Day; and be it

4 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature requests that public and
5 private citizens and organizations of the state work together on March 2, 2018, to raise
6 awareness among the students and citizens of the state of the importance of reading to young
7 children and the importance of independent reading.