

**Committees:**

House Finance Committee

•  
Legislative Budget &  
Audit

•  
Finance Subcommittee  
Chair of:

Alaska Court System  
Department of Law  
University of Alaska

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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University, and  
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neighborhoods*

## REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

HR 12

### Sponsor Statement

HR 12 aims to create a House Special Committee on Climate Change for the 31<sup>st</sup> Legislature.

2019 was Alaska's warmest year on record, with temperatures in many parts of the state many degrees above historical averages. In recent years, substantial parts of the state have experienced prolonged drought conditions, forest fires, disruptions to salmon harvests, increased temperatures, coastal erosion, and/or thawing permafrost. Rising temperatures have reduced Arctic sea ice, reducing prospects for traditional hunting while simultaneously creating opportunities for sea-based shipping and tourism.

As humans worldwide continue to burn fossil fuels to meet their energy needs, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere continues to rise. Since the beginning of the Industrial Age, atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> has increased by nearly 50% and has been the primary change responsible for increased global temperatures over the same time. Given that these changes impact high latitudes first, it is no surprise that Alaska continues to experience environmental shifts disproportionate to our consumption of fossil fuels.

As the United States' only Arctic state, Alaska is uniquely positioned to experience and address the impacts of climate change. These changes have quantifiable economic impacts on Alaska, and the time has come for the state to address the repercussions of a changing climate.

If passed by the House, the special committee proposed by HR 12 will have the opportunity to discuss climate policy, hear or create bills pertinent to the topic, engage in fact-finding on the impacts and opportunities afforded by a changing climate, and provide a legislative forum for discussion and education.

While Alaskans are responsible for far less fossil fuel consumption than the rest of the world, atmospheric carbon refuses to respect political borders. A changing environment presents both challenges and opportunities; while we may not be responsible for the environmental shifts in Alaska, we bear the responsibility to face these challenges. HR 12 represents a step towards doing just that, and I encourage you to support its passage in the House.

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