

31-LS0817\S
Nauman
1/30/20

CS FOR HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 12()

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY

**Offered:
Referred:**

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES JOSEPHSON, Spohnholz

A RESOLUTION

Establishing a House Special Committee on Climate Policy.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

WHEREAS Earth's climate is transforming more rapidly now than at any previous point in the history of modern civilization; and

WHEREAS climate change is already causing widespread and well-documented adverse ecological, social, and economic effects worldwide, and these adverse effects will become more severe as the climate continues to change; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, Anchorage experienced its hottest year on record, with 32 individual days setting new record daily highs; and

WHEREAS, in Anchorage, the five hottest years on record have occurred in the past six years; and

WHEREAS July 2019 marked the hottest month in the state's recorded history, with Utqiagvik, Kotzebue, King Salmon, Yakutat, and McGrath all experiencing record monthly highs; and

WHEREAS the severity and extent of drought conditions statewide have worsened with increasing mean temperatures; and

1 **WHEREAS** the increasingly active wildfire season in the state is associated with
2 longer snow-free seasons, changes in vegetation, drought, and loss of sea ice and permafrost;
3 and

4 **WHEREAS** wildfires burned over 2,500,000 acres statewide in 2019, requiring
5 substantial unplanned spending by the state; and

6 **WHEREAS** sea ice extents in the Bering Sea, Chukchi Sea, and Arctic Ocean are at
7 all-time lows, threatening the marine mammal populations that rely on the ice as habitat and
8 the subsistence way of life of indigenous peoples who hunt those animals; and

9 **WHEREAS** lower sea ice extent leads to Arctic amplification, causing the entire
10 Arctic region and the state to warm at a significantly higher rate compared to the rest of the
11 planet, and a warmer, ice-free Arctic Ocean exacerbates extreme weather events globally; and

12 **WHEREAS** an ice-free Arctic comes with significant economic and practical
13 implications for shipping, resource development, and tourism that must be actively addressed
14 by the state; and

15 **WHEREAS** many communities in western Alaska are experiencing drastic erosion
16 problems caused by thawing permafrost and more frequent winter storms, and some
17 communities have already been forced to relocate; and

18 **WHEREAS** thawing permafrost poses significant infrastructure challenges across the
19 state and jeopardizes access to resource development projects in remote regions of the state;
20 and

21 **WHEREAS** three-fourths of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System extends over land
22 underlain with permafrost, and the pipeline is therefore affected by rapid permafrost thawing
23 rates; and

24 **WHEREAS** the changing climate is estimated to add between \$3,600,000,000 and
25 \$6,100,000,000 to the costs of maintaining the state's public infrastructure before 2030; and

26 **WHEREAS** the United States Government Accountability Office has identified 31
27 villages in the state as being imminently threatened by flooding and erosion, and at least 12 of
28 those communities have decided to relocate in part or entirely; and

29 **WHEREAS** the costs of relocating the villages of Shishmaref and Kivalina, necessary
30 because of coastal erosion, winter storms, and rising sea levels linked to climate change, could
31 exceed \$170,000,000 for Shishmaref and \$400,000,000 for Kivalina; and

1 **WHEREAS** the state's glaciers are retreating rapidly, losing a cumulative
2 75,000,000,000 tons of ice annually and contributing appreciably to global sea level rise; and

3 **WHEREAS** increased glacial runoff causes changes in the temperature, salinity, and
4 sediment levels of rivers and streams, and the effects of these changes on anadromous fish
5 populations, including salmon, on which residents of the state rely for commercial and
6 subsistence harvests, are unknown; and

7 **WHEREAS** warming ocean temperatures cause increased ocean acidification,
8 potentially affecting mollusk and shellfish populations and the related fisheries; and

9 **WHEREAS** an increase in atmospheric and ocean temperatures creates uncertainty
10 for the survival of native species in the state, including fish populations statewide, and
11 threatens the livelihoods of many commercial fishermen; and

12 **WHEREAS** an increase in atmospheric and ocean temperatures is leading to an
13 increased prevalence of invasive species in the state, disrupting the state's fragile ecosystem;
14 and

15 **WHEREAS** the University of Alaska contributes significantly to the scientific body
16 of work relating to climate change, and the state has the opportunity to lead in global climate
17 research; and

18 **WHEREAS** the state is the only Arctic state in the nation and is properly positioned
19 to be an active and independent voice in international discourse relating to climate change and
20 adaptation policies, independent of the federal government; and

21 **WHEREAS** the House of Representatives recognizes the broad scope of issues
22 relating to climate change that must be addressed and the unique position the state occupies in
23 relation to those issues;

24 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the House of Representatives that a House Special Committee
25 on Climate Policy is established to ensure advancement in understanding of current climate
26 research and to explore policy options relating to climate change effects, mitigation,
27 resilience, and adaptation in the state; and be it

28 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall
29 determine the number of representatives to be members of the committee, appoint the
30 members, and designate a member or members to chair the committee; and be it

31 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the House Special Committee on Climate Policy may

- 1 meet during the Thirty-First Alaska State Legislature and is terminated upon the convening of
- 2 the First Regular Session of the Thirty-Second Alaska State Legislature.