

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 68 am

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTIETH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Amended: 5/5/98

Introduced: 4/22/98

A RESOLUTION

1 **Relating to continued operation of the McKinley Park airstrip for general aviation**
2 **and access to Denali National Park and Preserve.**

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

4 **WHEREAS** Denali National Park and Preserve is the top visitor destination in Alaska
5 and a critical site for the Alaska visitor and tourism industry; and

6 **WHEREAS** access to Denali National Park and Preserve is extremely restricted due
7 to the limited existing transportation infrastructure; and

8 **WHEREAS** visiting Denali National Park and Preserve is a high priority for many
9 Alaskans and for many visitors who fly to Alaska in their personal aircraft; and

10 **WHEREAS** the McKinley Park airstrip, located at the entrance to Denali National
11 Park and Preserve, provides direct access to the park, to the surface transportation system in
12 the park, and to the Alaska Railroad; and

13 **WHEREAS** the McKinley Park airstrip serves as a public airport facility as well as
14 a multimodal transportation transfer point; and

15 **WHEREAS** the automated weather observation system at the McKinley Park airstrip
16 supplies invaluable weather information to pilots traveling through Windy Pass; and

1 **WHEREAS** the McKinley Park airstrip provides an emergency landing area in
2 otherwise forbidding terrain in the event that a pilot experiences bad weather conditions or
3 mechanical problems with the aircraft; and

4 **WHEREAS** the closest alternative public airport, the Healy River Airport, has limited
5 space available for transient aircraft, has limited transient service facilities, is located 10 miles
6 from the entrance to Denali National Park and Preserve, and often experiences severe winds
7 that pose a hazard to aircraft; and

8 **WHEREAS** the Denali landing strip is eight miles from the entrance to Denali
9 National Park and Preserve, is operated as only a private airstrip, and is not open to the
10 public; and

11 **WHEREAS** the possibility of the closure of the McKinley Park airstrip was not
12 adequately discussed as part of the proposed alternative in the Entrance Area and Road
13 Corridor Development Concept Plan (Frontcountry Plan) during public hearings in 1996 and
14 thus has not received the benefit of proper public scrutiny and review; and

15 **WHEREAS** the planning section of the Alaska Department of Transportation and
16 Public Facilities has determined that the closure of the McKinley Park airstrip is not
17 recommended at this time;

18 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that the
19 National Park Service reconsider its decision to close the McKinley Park airstrip and permit
20 continued operation of the airstrip in order to provide convenient access to Denali National
21 Park and Preserve for Alaskans and visitors to Alaska and to fulfill a very important function
22 for general aviation.

23 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of
24 the United States Department of the Interior; Robert G. Stanton, Director, National Park
25 Service, United States Department of the Interior; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the
26 Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S.
27 Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.