

STATE OF ALASKA

THE LEGISLATURE

2014

Source
CSSCR 2(JUD)

Legislative
Resolve No.
48



Urging the United States Congress to act on the request of the governor to acquire for the state additional land in the Tongass National Forest from the United States government by purchase or negotiation or by seeking amendment to the Alaska Statehood Act.

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

WHEREAS the Tongass National Forest was created in 1907 by a proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt; and

WHEREAS, under the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339), the federal government provided Alaska with a 103,350,000-acre land entitlement, which was considered to be sufficient for the newly formed state to become economically self-supporting; and

WHEREAS the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339) gave the state 25 years to select land for entitlement; and

WHEREAS the 25-year period established in the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339) as the period in which the state may select land for entitlement was later extended, in effect, by various legislation, with the result that approximately 5,500,000 acres

of the land entitlement granted to the state by the Act have not yet been conveyed; and

WHEREAS, from the 1950s through the early 1990s, the commercial harvest of timber formed a major part of the economy of Southeast Alaska; and

WHEREAS the commercial harvest of timber no longer forms a major part of the economy of Southeast Alaska because the timber industry does not have access to an adequate amount of timber that can be economically harvested from the Tongass National Forest; and

WHEREAS, in the past four years, several efforts to revitalize the timber industry in Southeast Alaska have failed because a timber industry cannot exist without an adequate timber supply; and

WHEREAS the United States Congress has placed 40 percent of the Tongass National Forest off limits for commercial use, and the United States Forest Service has administratively set aside an additional 58 percent of the Tongass National Forest; and

WHEREAS, at the present time, only two percent of the Tongass National Forest is managed for the purpose of providing local communities with the opportunity to harvest timber; and

WHEREAS 91 percent of the old growth timber standing in the Tongass National Forest in 1954 remains standing, and the remaining nine percent that has been harvested has now been replaced with young growth timber that will begin maturing in about 30 years; and

WHEREAS findings prepared by the Alaska Timber Jobs Task Force in June 2012 reveal that the timber industry is vitally important to statewide and regional economies in the state; and

WHEREAS the principal barrier to job creation in the Southeast Alaska timber industry is the lack of a sufficient amount of timber that can be economically harvested from the Tongass National Forest; and

WHEREAS an unrealistic Tongass Land Management Plan dictated by Washington, D.C., endless environmental legal appeals, and a lack of political will by public officials who are in a position to support meeting timber harvest targets have prevented the United States Forest Service from providing the timber industry access to enough economically harvestable timber in the Tongass National Forest to make the timber industry commercially viable in Southeast Alaska; and

WHEREAS, because the United States Forest Service has not been able to provide

the timber industry with access to enough economically harvestable timber in the Tongass National Forest to sustain the timber industry in Southeast Alaska, it is time for the United States Congress to act on the governor's request to acquire additional land in the Tongass National Forest that will provide enough economically harvestable timber to create a sustainable economic base for the communities of Southeast Alaska; and

WHEREAS sec. 6 of the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339) limited the state's selection of land from the Tongass National Forest and the Chugach National Forest to 400,000 acres with the intention of preserving timber for federal long-term sales; and

WHEREAS sec. 6 of the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339) allowed the state to select land in other regions of the state without restricting the use of the land to recreation and community expansion, and, because the timber industry in Southeast Alaska has become unsustainable, the state should be entitled to acquire some of its remaining land entitlement under the Alaska Statehood Act from the Tongass National Forest;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully urges the United States Congress to act on the governor's request to negotiate state land entitlements under sec. 6 of the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339) or work to amend the Alaska Statehood Act for the purpose of acquiring forested land in the Tongass National Forest; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that, if the United States Congress fails to convey forested land in the Tongass National Forest either by negotiating state land entitlements under the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339) or by amending the Alaska Statehood Act, the Alaska State Legislature urges the governor to negotiate the purchase of forested land in the Tongass National Forest from the federal government.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States; the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Sally Jewell, United States Secretary of the Interior; the Honorable Tom Vilsack, United States Secretary of Agriculture; the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and the Honorable Sean Parnell, Governor of Alaska.