

STATE OF ALASKA

THE LEGISLATURE

2013

Source

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**Legislative
Resolve No.**

7



Relating to the presence and interests of the state and the nation in the Arctic; appreciating the United States' ongoing offer to include a representative of the state on the Arctic Council; relating to icebreakers; and relating to United States Coast Guard operations and facilities in the Arctic.

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

WHEREAS this state alone qualifies the United States as an Arctic nation; and

WHEREAS, according to the United States Geological Survey, the Arctic may hold up to 90,000,000,000 barrels of oil, the equivalent of 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil reserves, and 47.3 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, the equivalent of 30 percent of the world's undiscovered natural gas reserves, and the development of these resources would have a profound economic effect on the state and promote energy security for the nation; and

WHEREAS the amount of Arctic Ocean ice during the summer months has increasingly diminished, resulting in the opening of international shipping lanes through the Arctic; and

WHEREAS the Northwest Passage along North America and the Northern Sea Route

along Eurasia both pass through the Bering Strait and decrease shipping time and costs between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans compared to traveling conventional routes through the Suez Canal or Panama Canal; and

WHEREAS growing interest in economic and strategic opportunities in the Arctic has led the Russian Federation to announce its interests in the region and, in August 2007, to plant a Russian flag on the Arctic Ocean seabed and resume strategic bomber flights over the Arctic region for the first time since the end of the Cold War; and

WHEREAS Russia has submitted a claim to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to an area of 460,000 square miles in the Arctic Ocean, an area the size of Germany, France, and Italy combined; and

WHEREAS the United States Coast Guard does not have a base on or adjacent to the Arctic Ocean, inhibiting the nation's ability to respond to situations that could threaten United States sovereignty in the Arctic and reducing the nation's emergency and disaster preparedness in the area; and

WHEREAS increasing interest in the Arctic as a result of emerging geopolitical and economic factors has created a national priority for the United States to map the Arctic floor, which is essential to establish legitimate claims to areas beyond the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone and best assert the nation's rights in the international community; and

WHEREAS, as the use of international shipping lanes through the Arctic Ocean becomes possible, the demand for icebreaker vessels is increasing; and

WHEREAS Canada currently has six icebreaker vessels, with a plan to complete a seventh, the 459-foot John G. Diefenbaker, in 2017; and

WHEREAS the Russian icebreaker fleet is the largest in the world, with 36 vessels, including 17 government-operated icebreakers and six nuclear-powered icebreakers with at least 45,000 brake horsepower; and

WHEREAS a seventh nuclear-powered Russian icebreaker is currently under construction, and three more nuclear-powered icebreakers are planned for completion by 2017; and

WHEREAS the most powerful icebreaker in the world, the Russian nuclear-powered 50 Years of Victory, commissioned in 2007, is 524 feet long, has 75,000 horsepower, and can

break ice up to 9.2 feet thick; and

WHEREAS the United States has five icebreakers, only three of which are United States Coast Guard vessels; and

WHEREAS only one of the United States Coast Guard icebreakers, the USCGC Healy, which has 30,000 horsepower and was designed primarily for research purposes, is presently in service; and

WHEREAS, of the two other United States Coast Guard icebreakers, the USCGC Polar Star and the USCGC Polar Sea, constructed in 1976 and 1977, the USCGC Polar Sea is unlikely to return to service and the USCGC Polar Star is not anticipated to return to service until late 2013 at the earliest; and

WHEREAS the Arctic Council is a high-level forum of Arctic states, is the only circumpolar forum that includes all of the Arctic states, and includes participation of Arctic indigenous peoples for the purpose of holding political discussions on Arctic issues shared in common and fostering Arctic cooperation; and

WHEREAS the Arctic Council includes official state representatives from the governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United States; and

WHEREAS the chairmanship of the Arctic Council rotates every two years, and, following the chairmanship of Canada beginning in May 2013, the United States will assume chairmanship of the Arctic Council in May 2015; and

WHEREAS the United States has a presence on the Arctic Council only because of Alaska's location in the Arctic; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, in the spirit of cooperation between the Arctic states, and cognizant of the harsh conditions that pose a challenge to search and rescue operations in the Arctic and the vital importance of providing rapid assistance to persons in distress in those circumstances, the Arctic Council signed the council's first legally binding agreement in Nuuk, Greenland, to coordinate search and rescue operations in the Arctic Ocean; and

WHEREAS the official state delegation of Canada to the Arctic Council includes representatives from the governments of the territories of Yukon and Nunavut; and

WHEREAS the official United States delegation to the Arctic Council does not include any officially appointed representative from Alaska; and

WHEREAS the interests of the state are directly affected by Arctic policy;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature, recognizing the importance of diplomatic opportunities and the particular effect of Arctic policy on the state's interests, appreciates the United States' ongoing offer since the inception of the Arctic Council to include a designated representative from this state as a member of its official delegation to the Arctic Council; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States Congress and the President of the United States to provide the United States Coast Guard with sufficient funding to expand its Arctic operations, to retrofit the nation's existing icebreaker fleet, to build needed vessels and facilities, including icebreakers and a United States Coast Guard base for Arctic operations, to map the United States outer continental shelf for the purpose of preserving and defending the nation's sovereign territorial rights, and to maintain a strong presence in the region; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States to continue to assert its political, strategic, environmental, and economic interests in the Arctic, with particular emphasis on the well-being of the state, and to take a leadership role in guiding international Arctic policy through diplomatic, military, and economic means.

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 John F. Kerry, United States Secretary of State; General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Honorable Janet A. Napolitano, United States Secretary of Homeland Security; the Honorable Robert Menendez, Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; the Honorable Michael T. McCaul, Chair of the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security; the Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; the Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations; the Honorable Dave Camp, Chair of the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee; the Honorable Bob Corker, ranking member, U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr., Commandant of the United States Coast Guard; and 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 all other members of

the United States Senate.