

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Rep. Bill Thomas, Co-Chair
State Capitol, Room 505
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Phone (907) 465-3732
Fax (907) 465-2652



Official Business

Rep. Bill Stoltze, Co-Chair
State Capitol, Room 515
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Phone - (907) 465- 4958
Fax (907) 465-4928

Request for Bill Hearing

I am requesting a bill hearing for CSHCR 23 an act, "Establishing and relating to the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission" in Senate Finance. One of the top three recommendations of the Alaska Northern Waters Task Force is the establishment of a commission that will create an Arctic policy for Alaska. The passage of CSHCR 23 will accomplish that goal. If you have any questions or concerns please contact myself or Christine Hess at 465-4833. I look forward to working with you on this matter.

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Rep. Bill Stoltze, Co-Chair
State Capitol, Room 515
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Phone - (907) 465-4958
Fax (907) 465-4928

CSHCR 23 – Establishing the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Sponsor Statement

The Alaska Northern Waters Task Force (ANWTF) was established in 2010 to identify the opportunities and challenges of a changing Arctic. Arctic Nations are anticipating the development of northern shipping routes, mineral extraction, oil and gas exploration, commercial fisheries, and tourism. Some of this change has already started to occur. The ANWT completed its final report on January 30, 2012. The report includes recommendations in six Arctic policy areas: Governance, Oil & Gas Development, Marine Transportation, Fisheries, Infrastructure, and Research. The report is by far the broadest and most detailed statement of Alaska's Arctic policy to date, yet much work remains to fully expound upon all the diverse issues that the Task Force brought forward.

BACKGROUND:

While the United States has an official written Arctic Policy (National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD)-66), Alaska does not. Most of the other Arctic Nations and the Northwest Territories already have established Arctic policies. As the jurisdiction that makes the United States an Arctic nation and as the only U.S. state that is home to Arctic residents, Alaska needs an Arctic policy of its own. Alaska needs to position itself now regarding the nation's Arctic policy – Alaska cannot take that leadership role without understanding what its own priorities should be. This is especially critical considering the United States will be chairing the Arctic Council from 2015-2017. The Arctic Policy Commission will provide the legislature an opportunity to remain engaged in the ongoing Arctic dialogue and to help shape future Alaskan Arctic policy.

MEMBERSHIP:

Toward this end, CSHCR 23 creates in the legislative branch an Alaska Arctic Policy Commission. The 17-member Commission would include:

- 3 senators appointed by the Senate President (one acting as Co-Chair)
- 3 representatives appointed by the House Speaker (one acting as Co-Chair)
- 1 member from the executive branch appointed by the Governor

- 10 members appointed jointly by the President and the Speaker representing:
 - The federal government
 - A tribal entity
 - The mining industry
 - The oil & gas industry
 - The University of Alaska
 - Fisheries
 - A local government
 - A coastal community
 - An international Arctic organization
 - A conservation group

EXPLANATION OF CHANGES IN THE BILL:

In the House Finance committee several small changes were made. A 17th member was added representing a conservation group and the language regarding a university member was broadened to include any accredited university or college in Alaska. Additionally, four alternate members were added and a hearing in Southeast Alaska as well. The fiscal note has been updated to reflect these changes.

CONCLUSION:

Over the course of two years, the Alaska Policy Commission will hold meetings in Arctic areas of the state as well as Anchorage and Fairbanks. The Commission is tasked with providing preliminary recommendations on Alaska's Arctic policy by January 30, 2014 and delivering a final report by January 30, 2015.