

ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES
2024 ANNUAL CONVENTION
RESOLUTION 24-12

- TITLE: ADVANCING ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY IN RURAL ALASKA COMMUNITIES
- WHEREAS: The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska, and its membership includes 174 federally recognized Tribes, 154 village corporations, 9 regional corporations, and 9 regional nonprofit and Tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs; and
- WHEREAS: The mission of AFN is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic, and political voice of the entire Alaska Native Community; and
- WHEREAS: The Village of Aniak and the Akiak Native Community, two of the 229 federally recognized Tribes in Alaska, have recently endured severe energy crises, underscoring the broader and systemic energy challenges faced by rural Alaska communities; and
- WHEREAS: Energy sovereignty is the cornerstone of Tribal self-determination, empowering Alaska Native communities to make decisions about their energy systems that align with their cultural values, economic needs, and environmental stewardship; and
- WHEREAS: Energy security is fundamental to preserving cultural practices, maintaining local economies, and ensuring the well-being of residents in rural Alaska communities; and
- WHEREAS: The ability to sustainably harvest, process, and store traditional foods is intrinsically linked to energy security, making reliable and affordable energy systems crucial for sustaining food sovereignty in rural Alaska; and
- WHEREAS: Rural Alaska communities face significant challenges related to the reliability, affordability, and sustainability of their energy systems, leading to severe impacts on residents' well-being, cultural practices, and economic stability; and
- WHEREAS: These limitations hamper the efforts of regional and village Alaska Native Corporations to support the economic needs of their shareholders; and
- WHEREAS: Recent events highlight the severity of these challenges:
1. In May 2023, the community of Aniak faced a severe energy crisis when power bills suddenly quadrupled, forcing families, businesses, and the local

school district into financial distress; and

2. Akiak endured a 52-day power outage due to generator failures, forcing residents to rely on personal generators at a cost of approximately \$100 per day to preserve subsistence foods; and

WHEREAS: The financial strain of these energy crises, even on households receiving Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) support, often exhausts available resources long before emergencies arise, signaling a need for increased LIHEAP funding to address unforeseen energy crises in rural Alaska; and

WHEREAS: Climate change poses unprecedented challenges to rural Alaska's energy and food systems, necessitating innovative, locally driven solutions that respect traditional knowledge and sovereign Tribal rights; and

WHEREAS: The Association of Village Council Presidents Regional Housing Authority (AVCP RHA), a Tribally Designated Housing Entity, administers federal HUD Office of Native Programs, Indian Housing Block Grant funds for 52 Tribes across 48 communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region, including Aniak and Akiak; and

WHEREAS: AVCP RHA reports that unsustainable increases in energy costs directly impact current and future housing projects, hindering their ability to provide affordable housing in areas already facing the nation's highest rates of overcrowding, limited economic opportunities, and exorbitant living expenses; and

WHEREAS: The pervasiveness of escalating energy costs across rural Alaska severely impacts the quality and affordability of education, threatening the ability of institutions like the Kuspuk School District to provide essential services, maintain facilities, and support programs vital for preserving cultural knowledge and preparing students for future opportunities; and

WHEREAS: Decision-making boards, commissions, and regulatory entities in Alaska often lack adequate representation from rural and Alaska Native communities, resulting in policies that fail to effectively address the unique challenges these communities face; and

WHEREAS: Effective policy solutions must be tailored to the unique logistical, cultural, and economic conditions in rural Alaska, which differ significantly from those in urban areas, and must be developed with meaningful input from Tribal leaders, affected rural residents, and affected regional and village Alaska Native Corporations.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2024 Annual Convention of the

Alaska Federation of Natives call upon the State of Alaska and the federal government to recognize energy sovereignty as an inalienable right of Tribal nations, fundamental to self-determination, cultural preservation, and food security, and to work in true government-to-government partnership with Tribes to develop sustainable, culturally-rooted energy solutions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2024 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives urge the State of Alaska and Federal Government to immediately issue disaster declarations for energy crises affecting all Tribes in Alaska, ensuring timely and effective assistance that respects Tribal sovereignty; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2024 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives call on the State of Alaska and Federal Government to expedite and increase LIHEAP funding specifically designated for energy emergencies in rural Alaska, providing direct relief to households impacted by such crises and supporting food security efforts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2024 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives demand the State of Alaska and Federal Government prioritize the inclusion of Alaska Native and Tribal representatives on relevant boards and commissions to ensure that rural energy challenges and sovereignty concerns are adequately reflected in decision-making spaces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2024 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives advocate for the development of a comprehensive, statewide rural energy strategy that addresses the unique needs of each region, promotes energy independence, and supports traditional subsistence practices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2024 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives call for increased investment in renewable energy systems and infrastructure upgrades that align with local cultural values and promote long-term sustainability in rural Alaska communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2024 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives call on the State of Alaska and Federal Government to create a Rural Alaska Energy Sovereignty Task Force, comprised primarily of Tribal leaders and rural residents and affected regional and village Alaska Native Corporations, to develop a comprehensive strategy that integrates energy independence, food security, and climate resilience while upholding Tribal sovereignty and self-determination principles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2024 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives pass this resolution to garner broader support for these

critical issues affecting rural Alaska.

SUBMITTED BY: ANIAK TRADITIONAL COUNCIL AND THE ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL
PRESIDENTS

COMMITTEE ACTION: DO PASS

BOARD ACTION: PASSED TO THE FLOOR

CONVENTION ACTION: PASSED AS AMENDED