

ALASKA LEGISLATURE

Committees:

Chair: Special Committee on Arctic Policy,
Economic Development, and Tourism

Member:
Resources
Community and Regional Affairs
Special Committee on Energy



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Sponsor Statement HJR 19: Arctic Marine Safety Agreements

Since 2008 there has been increased vessel traffic in the Bering Sea. Many of these vessels are transiting from the Northern Sea Route to the North Pacific Ocean. Vessels not calling on a port in the United States are considered what is called “innocent passage” and not subject to United States safety or spill prevention measures.

Prevention measures include vessel tracking and monitoring, prescribed routing measures, immediate notification of loss of vessel power or steering, prepositioned towing packages and ship arrestors, dynamic protection of local marine mammal resources, among others.

The Arctic Waterways Safety Committee was formed in 2014 by Arctic municipalities, marine mammal hunting groups, and Arctic marine ship operators to promote and identify safe and environmentally responsible shipping operations in the Arctic.

Without universal prevention measures, vessels on innocent passage are not subject to safety and spill prevention measure standards or regulations. This lack of uniformity makes Alaska, and its residents, vulnerable to mishaps outside of the jurisdiction of the United States to enforce.

HJR 19 urges the Governor of Alaska and the state’s congressional delegation to promote and adopt spill prevention measures into international agreements, and, furthermore, for the President of the United States and the United States Department of State to initiate negotiations with the state’s coastal neighbors to enter into such agreements.

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