

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 29

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES MILLETT, Gruenberg, Fairclough, Tuck, Thompson

Introduced: 1/17/12

Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, to**
2 **plug legacy wells properly and to reclaim the legacy well sites as soon as possible in**
3 **order to protect the environment in the Arctic region.**

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

5 **WHEREAS** the United States Navy and the United States Geological Survey drilled
6 approximately 137 wells on federal land in northern Alaska between 1944 and 1981, all of
7 which are now abandoned; and

8 **WHEREAS** the United States Bureau of Land Management is the current operator of
9 the abandoned wells, now referred to as legacy wells; and

10 **WHEREAS** only seven of the legacy wells have been properly plugged and
11 reclaimed; and

12 **WHEREAS** the remaining legacy wells are out of compliance with the regulations
13 adopted by the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, and 42 of the remaining legacy
14 wells are flagrantly out of compliance; and

15 **WHEREAS** three of the legacy wells can no longer be found; and

1 **WHEREAS** the changing geography of the Arctic puts additional legacy wells at risk
2 of being lost before remediation can occur; and

3 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission has repeatedly
4 reminded the federal government of the obligation to plug legacy wells properly and to
5 reclaim legacy well sites; and

6 **WHEREAS** the legacy wells that have not been properly plugged and reclaimed pose
7 a significant risk to surface vegetation, groundwater, fish, land mammals, and sea mammals;
8 and

9 **WHEREAS** wood and metal debris and deteriorating buildings at the sites of the
10 legacy wells litter the landscape and detract from the natural beauty of the Arctic region; and

11 **WHEREAS** the federal government has received \$9,480,946,486 from lease sales in
12 the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska and the outer continental shelf of the state and
13 should use a portion of those funds to plug and reclaim legacy wells in the state; and

14 **WHEREAS** the state cannot impose fines on the federal government for violating the
15 regulations of the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, but if it could do so, the
16 fines would exceed \$8,000,000,000; if the statute of limitations were disregarded, the fines
17 would exceed \$40,000,000,000; and

18 **WHEREAS** both state and federal regulations require the plugging and reclamation of
19 legacy wells, and the federal government would not allow a private entity to remain in
20 violation of those regulations;

21 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States
22 Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, to plug legacy wells properly and to
23 reclaim the legacy well sites as soon as possible in order to protect the environment in the
24 Arctic region.

25 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of
26 the United States; the Honorable Ken Salazar, United States Secretary of the Interior; the
27 Honorable Robert V. Abbey, Director, United States Bureau of the Interior, Bureau of Land
28 Management; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S.
29 Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska
30 delegation in Congress.