



Representative Alan Austerman

Alaska State Legislature

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 19

House Joint Resolution 19 recognizes the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill and supports continuation of the practice of dual tug escorts for loaded oil tankers traversing Prince William Sound.

Currently, Trans-Alaska Pipeline System oil tankers in Prince William Sound are required to have two tug escorts when carrying oil. This is in accordance with the Oil Spill Prevention Act of 1990, a federal mandate. This act does not require tug escorts for double hull tankers, however. At the present time, all but two tankers engaged in the TAPS trade are double-hulled ships.

The regulations keeping the escort system in place for all tankers—including double-hulled tankers—are embodied in the oil spill contingency plans filed by oil shippers with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. While the shippers say they do not envision changes in the escort system in the immediate future, these plans are as a matter of fact subject to review and amendment by the shippers at any time.

The current escort system is a vital component in preventing catastrophic oil spills in Prince William Sound and in responding when oil spills occur. It should be retained to assure the continued protection of Alaska's fisheries resources, both commercial and recreational, along with traditional subsistence uses, tourism, and the many other uses of the natural resources of Prince William Sound and the adjacent Gulf of Alaska. While HJR19 carries no legal force, it will educate Alaskans, spark debate, and put the Alaska Legislature on record as supporting the continued operation of the world-class escort system in Prince William Sound.###

~ Representing Alaska State House District 36 ~

Akhiok | Igiugig | Iliamna | Karluk | Kodiak | Kokhanok | Larsen Bay | Levelock
Newhalen | Nondalton | Old Harbor | Ouzinkie | Pedro Bay | Port Alsworth | Port Lions

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES AUSTERMAN, Harris, Gara

Introduced: 2/23/09

Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Recognizing the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill and supporting the**
2 **continued practice of accompanying each oil tanker through Prince William Sound with**
3 **at least a two vessel escort.**

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

5 **WHEREAS** March 24, 2009, marks the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil
6 spill; and

7 **WHEREAS** the Exxon Valdez oil spill was the worst oil tanker spill in the history of
8 the United States, discharging 10,800,000 gallons of crude oil into Prince William Sound and
9 contaminating approximately 1,300 miles of Alaska coastline; and

10 **WHEREAS**, since the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, the Alyeska Pipeline Service
11 Company and the crude oil shippers have created a world-class oil spill prevention and
12 response system in Prince William Sound; and

13 **WHEREAS** the oil tanker vessels transiting Prince William Sound are increasingly of
14 a double-hulled design, as required by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990; and

15 **WHEREAS** the Prince William Sound oil tanker escort vessels provide immediate,

on-scene response should a spill occur; and

WHEREAS all loaded oil tankers, including double-hulled oil tankers, are currently escorted by at least two escort vessels through Prince William Sound; and

WHEREAS the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 mandates that only single-hulled tankers of 5,000 gross tons or more be escorted by at least two escort vessels while in Prince William Sound; and

WHEREAS there is no assurance in any state or federal law or regulation that each oil tanker in Prince William Sound will continue to be escorted by at least two escort vessels capable of providing immediate spill prevention and response; and

WHEREAS, since the implementation of the two-vessel escort system in Prince William Sound, there have been no major oil spills, and potential accidents have been reduced to near misses; and

WHEREAS double hulls are not a perfect prevention measure, and it would be imprudent to alter a proven oil spill prevention and response program based solely on improvements in oil tanker vessel engineering and design;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature supports the continued practice in Prince William Sound of accompanying each loaded oil tanker, whether single-hulled or double-hulled, with at least two escort vessels.

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 Janet Napolitano, United States Secretary of Homeland Security; Admiral Thad W. Allen, Commandant of the United States Coast Guard; the Honorable Sarah Palin, Governor of Alaska; Kevin Hostler, President and Chief Executive Officer, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company; Anil Mathur, Chief Executive Officer, Alaska Tanker Company; George P. McShea, Jr., Vice-President of Operations, Polar Tankers Inc.; Stu McRobbie, Vice-President of Operations, SeaRiver Maritime; Tim Plummer, President, Tesoro Maritime Company; Jeff Williams, Environmental Manager, Chevron Shipping Company; 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.

Kodiak Chamber of Commerce
RESOLUTION NUMBER 03-09-01

**A RESOLUTION OF THE KODIAK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SUPPORTING
SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 11 AND HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 19
REQUIRING OIL TANKER VESSELS BE ACCOMPANIED BY TWO VESSEL
ESCORTS**

WHEREAS, the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to Kodiak's future; and.

WHEREAS, lessons from the past are helpful in planning for the future; and

WHEREAS, in 1989 the Kodiak community was traumatized by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill; and

WHEREAS, since 1989 the practice of requiring a two vessel escort for tankers in Prince William Sound has contributed to no other oil spills in Prince William Sound; and

WHEREAS, in Senate Joint Resolution 11 and House Joint Resolution 19, the Alaska Legislature has an opportunity to inform the appropriate officials and companies that the practice of requiring a two vessel escort for tankers should continue; and

WHEREAS, the Kodiak community should not be subjected to another oil spill.

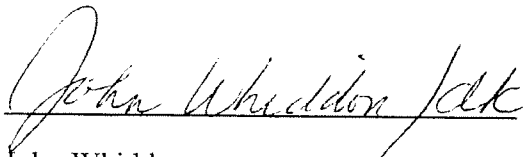
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce encourages the Alaska Legislature to pass SJR 11 or HJR 19.

Passed and approved by the Board of Directors of the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce this
6th day of March 2009.

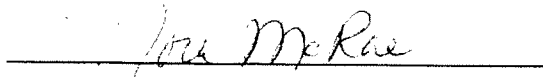
Signed this 6th day of March 2009.

KODIAK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ATTEST:


John Whiddon

President



Nora McRae

Secretary to the Board



OLD HARBOR
NATIVE CORPORATION

March 10, 2009

Hon. Gary Stevens, President
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol, Room 111
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

[Via Fax: 907 465-3517]

Hon. Alan Austerman
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 434
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

[Via Fax: 907 465-4956]

Re: Support for Senate Joint Res. 11 and House Joint Res. 19

Dear Senator Stevens and Representative Austerman:

This letter is to express deep appreciation and strong support for your introduction of Senate Joint Resolution No. 11 and House Joint Resolution No. 19 respectively resolving --

"that the Alaska State Legislature supports the continued practice in Prince William Sound of accompanying each loaded oil tanker, whether single-hulled or double-hulled, with at least two escort vessels."

Your resolutions will help ensure that the marine safety system for loaded oil tankers traveling from the Marine Oil Terminal in Valdez, Alaska through Prince William Sound is *not weakened* by reducing the current practice of using dual escort tugs to accompany such tankers. The continued practice of dual escorts is crucial to protecting people, communities, livelihoods, the economy, fish and wildlife and other natural resources of the Prince William Sound and other portions of the Gulf of Alaska within the Exxon Valdez oil spill region from another devastating oil spill.

As one of numerous communities in the oil spill region, the village of Old Harbor, for which the Old Harbor Native Corporation is the village corporation authorized by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, witnessed and experienced, and continues to experience, the aftermath of the 1989 oil spill. President George H. W. Bush called that spill "the worst marine environmental disaster this Nation has ever experienced." Clearly, such a disaster should never be permitted to happen again.

Fortunately, because of the actions of the U.S. Congress, federal agencies, the State of Alaska, the citizens' panel authorized by Congress to help oversee the operations at the terminus of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and oil transport through Prince William Sound, and to their credit, industry itself, the current marine safety system at Valdez is viewed by most to be among the safest in the world. The employment of dual escorts is a critical core safety component of that system.

Hon. Gary Stevens and Hon. Alan Austerman
March 10, 2009
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We all learned the hard way that regardless of tanker technology . . . human error, equipment failure, weather, obstacles in the water such as icebergs, and other factors can contribute to the creation of catastrophic results. The 1989 oil spill resulted in enormous disruption and harm to the lives and livelihoods of people living in the region, including people in our village, to the fishing industry, to tourism, to subsistence resources and to the marine, intertidal and terrestrial shoreline environment.

Considering the huge social, environmental, economic and cultural impacts and costs of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, it would be a "penny-wise and pound-foolish" to diminish the current protections in place. We are concerned particularly about any effort by industry or others to reduce protections in place now by calling for a "risk assessment" of the marine safety system at the Port of Valdez and Prince William Sound. We believe as you appear to believe by virtue of your resolutions, and as most Alaskans do, that our state and the nation have already gone through a risk assessment in 1989 . . . the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

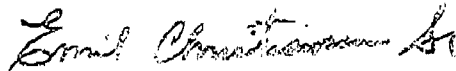
To weaken the current system that is working so well would be indefensible. Given that that system is the best insurance policy the public and industry could devise, we hope the oil industry will concur with the intent of your resolutions. Anyone who attempts to weaken the current system would be placing the entire region in serious jeopardy once again. Therefore, we urge you to be steadfast in keeping your resolutions strong and in doing so to protect the natural resources, communities, and the economy of the entire region.

On behalf of the shareholders of our village corporation, thank you for your leadership and the wisdom and judgment of those who join you in seeking passage of Senate Joint Resolution 11 and House Joint Resolution 19. We strongly support your efforts to obtain passage by the Alaska State Legislature of these resolutions.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

OLD HARBOR NATIVE CORPORATION



Emil Christiansen Sr.
President

cc: Kodiak Island Borough Assembly
City Council, Kodiak, Alaska
Dr. Sven Haakanson Jr., Director, Alutiiq Museum and Repository
Kodiak Area Aquaculture Association
Kodiak Island Convention and Visitors Bureau
Kodiak Chamber of Commerce
Kodiak Area Native Association
Kodiak Village Mayors Association
Mayor, Old Harbor, Alaska
Board of Directors, Old Harbor Native Corporation