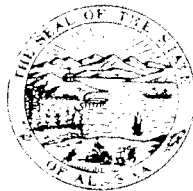


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## ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE House District 35

### Sponsor Statement HJR 22

HJR 22 urges the U.S. Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ("Law of the Sea treaty"). This resolution will help Alaska's Senate delegation bring the Law of the Sea treaty to the Senate floor for a vote on ratification. Ratification of this treaty is important to protect U.S. interests concerning the use and development of the high seas off Alaska.

The Law of the Sea treaty governs many aspects of oceans, such as mapping, state area control, environmental control, marine scientific research, economic and commercial activities, transfer of technology and the settlement of disputes relating to ocean matters.

150 countries are signatories to the treaty, including all of the arctic nations with the exception of the United States.

According to the office of U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, a resolution from the Alaska State Legislature would be helpful as she works this late spring or early summer to get a ratification vote to the Senate Floor. U.S. participation in the Law of the Sea Treaty was approved in 1994 by President Clinton after work was done on portions of the treaty to address concerns raised by President Reagan. The Bush Administration actively supported Senate ratification of the treaty. Among other entities on the record supporting ratification are the United States Coast Guard, the Department of the Navy, Governor Sarah Palin, The State Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, AT&T, The American Petroleum Institute, The International Association of Drilling Contractors, and the National Oceans Industries Association.

The U.S. is now the only arctic nation that is not a signatory to the treaty. Under the treaty, member nations can claim an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to 200 miles, with sovereign rights to explore, develop, and manage the resources within that zone. A claim can extend beyond the 200 mile limit if a connection can be proven that the nation's continental shelf extends beyond 200 miles. It is estimated that the northern seabed off Alaska and beyond the 200 mile limit could be as large as the state of California.

Key features of the Law of the Sea treaty include the following:

- Coastal States exercise sovereignty over their territorial sea which may not exceed 12 nautical miles; foreign vessels are allowed "innocent passage" through those waters;
- Ships and aircraft of all countries are allowed "transit passage" through straits used for international navigation; States bordering the straits can regulate navigational and other aspects of passage;
- Coastal States have sovereign rights in the 200-nautical mile EEZ with respect to natural resources and certain economic activities, and exercise jurisdiction over marine science research and environmental protection;
- All other States have freedom of navigation and over flight in the EEZ, as well as freedom to lay submarine cables and pipelines;
- All States enjoy the traditional freedoms of navigation, overflight, scientific research and fishing on the high seas; they are obliged to adopt, or cooperate with other States in adopting, measures to manage and conserve living resources;
- States are bound to prevent and control marine pollution and are liable for damage caused by violation of their international obligations to combat such pollution;
- All marine scientific research in the EEZ and on the continental shelf is subject to the consent of the coastal State, but in most cases they are obliged to grant consent to other States when the research is to be conducted for peaceful purposes and fulfils specified criteria;
- States Parties are obliged to settle by peaceful means their disputes concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention;
- Disputes can be submitted to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea established under the Convention, to the International Court of Justice, or to arbitration. Arbitration is also available and, in certain circumstances, submission to it would be compulsory. The Tribunal has exclusive jurisdiction over deep seabed mining disputes.

The State of Alaska has much to gain from controlling development in the waters adjacent to our 200 mile EEZ and much to lose if we are the only arctic nation not to extend our ocean boundaries.