

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA GEOGRAPHY PROGRAM

University of Alaska Geography Program



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Representative Bob Herron
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801

Potential Changes to HJR34 (Coast Guard Icebreakers & Arctic Base)

Dear Representative Herron,

I am writing this as an Arctic policy researcher at UAF with experience as a U.S. Coast Guard officer and work within the Arctic Council. I have reviewed HJR34 and propose two, key changes to the Committee. One is a protocol issue and the second, removal of, or changes to, the final resolution statement in the draft text.

(A)-Protocol Issue ~ In the Draft HJR34, the Resolution is being sent to Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) of the eight Arctic states. Since the Resolution is being sent to our Secretary of State, among many, it should also by protocol be sent to the seven Foreign Ministers who act as Arctic Ministers of their respective Arctic state. Sending the Resolution directly to the SAO's is inappropriate since they are the administrative agents for the Arctic Ministers doing the work of the Arctic Council. The Senior Arctic Official's are not the leaders of the Arctic Council as leadership of the Council is the responsibility of the eight Foreign Ministers of the Arctic states. I highly recommend the Alaska Legislature pass this Resolution to the Secretary of State and her seven colleagues, the Foreign Ministers of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Russia.

(B)-Further Resolved.... (Final Text) ~ I believe this passage should be removed as the overall sense of the resolution prior to this text is that the Congress and the Administration are to fund all federal (in this case Coast Guard) facilities and vessels. HJR34 should not specify how to execute this responsibility. This is the responsibility of the Congressional appropriators working in concert with the federal agencies. As for the charging for icebreaker escorts, most of these waters around Alaska allow for freedom of navigation (where no fees can be charged under international law); these waters are not the internal waters of the U.S. Charging fees for icebreaker escort in the Arctic is only conducted along Russia's Northern Sea Route; Canada does not charge fees (and never has) for escort by federal icebreakers in the Canadian Arctic. Both in the U.S. and Canada, under emergency situations, icebreakers will assist in escort (such as the recent Nome operation). I do not believe the Alaska State Legislature should have words in the Resolution regarding options involving the private sector, specifically leasing of future U.S. Coast Guard icebreakers (rather than fully funded by the Congress) or passing our current icebreakers to the private sector for commercial operation.

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Thank you for the opportunity to review HJR34 and provide recommended changes to the text. I would be pleased to assist you and your staff with Arctic policy matters at any time.

Very Respectfully,

Lawson W. Brigham

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