

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 18

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Introduced: 4/17/11

Referred: House Special Committee on Fisheries

A RESOLUTION

1 **Relating to an examination of fisheries-related programs and resources in the state to**
2 **determine how those programs and resources may best be strengthened and focused to**
3 **facilitate the entry of young Alaskans into gainful, lifelong commercial fisheries careers**
4 **and to the development of a systematic, aggressive, and sustained program to turn the**
5 **tide on the graying of the fleet and to increase ownership of successful commercial**
6 **fisheries operations by young Alaskans.**

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

8 **WHEREAS** the Alaska seafood industry employs more workers than any other
9 private sector industry in the state; and

10 **WHEREAS**, to continue to thrive, the Alaska resident seafood industry will need
11 future generations of Alaskans to engage in rewarding, ownership-level careers in the
12 industry; and

13 **WHEREAS** the average age of a commercial salmon fishing skipper in the state has
14 risen from approximately 41 years of age in 1980 to older than 48 years of age in recent years;

1 **WHEREAS** the average age of an Alaska Peninsula salmon seine permit holder is
2 53.6 years, the average age of a Bristol Bay driftnet permit holder is 47.9 years, and the
3 average age of a Southeast power troll permit holder is 53.9 years; and

4 **WHEREAS**, since the advent of limited entry and quota share fisheries, the financial
5 barriers that hinder young Alaskans in establishing viable fishing businesses have mounted
6 and multiplied, with the cost of some limited entry salmon permits at more than \$100,000 and
7 the average cost of halibut quota shares rising 195 percent between 1995 and 2009; and

8 **WHEREAS** the overall cost of entry into the commercial fisheries on a diversified
9 level sufficient to provide a viable income for a skipper and crew has increased to at least
10 \$300,000 for boat, gear, permit, and quota shares; and

11 **WHEREAS** escalating costs thwart the ambitions of young fishers, many of whom
12 lack the extensive credit histories and considerable collateral assets needed to secure
13 substantial bank loans; and

14 **WHEREAS** a modern commercial fishing operation requires an operator to possess
15 business savvy and a sophisticated understanding of regulatory processes, as well as the
16 ability to engage with federal and state fisheries policy makers; and

17 **WHEREAS** barriers faced by young people in the state seeking to acquire ownership
18 of fisheries operations play a significant role in the drain of limited entry permits and fishery
19 quota shares from coastal communities and contribute to increasing ownership of fisheries
20 permits and businesses in the state by nonresidents; and

21 **WHEREAS** programs of the commercial fishing revolving loan fund in the
22 Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development seek to promote the
23 development of predominantly resident fisheries in the state; and

24 **WHEREAS** the office of fisheries development in the Department of Commerce,
25 Community, and Economic Development provides a wide variety of resources designed to
26 spur fisheries-related economic development; and

27 **WHEREAS** the Alaska sea grant program, which is funded in part by the legislature
28 through the University of Alaska, provides young Alaskans with education and training in
29 fisheries business financial management, seafood direct marketing, state and federal
30 regulatory processes, and effective public speaking before regulatory bodies; and

31 **WHEREAS**, to varying degrees, high schools and postsecondary educational

1 institutions in the state offer classes in fisheries skill sets and nautical sciences; and

2 **WHEREAS** the University of Alaska Fairbanks offers a bachelor of arts degree in
3 fisheries to provide students with a knowledge base, skills set, and practical experience to be
4 highly competitive in obtaining rewarding employment in the state's fishing industry; and

5 **WHEREAS** the graying of the fleet in the state continues unabated;

6 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature shall thoroughly examine
7 fisheries-related programs and resources in the state to determine how those programs and
8 resources may best be strengthened and focused to facilitate the entry of young Alaskans into
9 gainful, lifelong commercial fisheries careers; and be it

10 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that, having identified, ordered, and enhanced available
11 resources, the Alaska State Legislature shall apply the state's resources in a systematic,
12 aggressive, and sustained program to turn the tide on the graying of the fleet and to increase
13 ownership of successful Alaska commercial fisheries operations by young Alaskans.