

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senate District N
Anchorage Hillside, Turnagain Arm,
Cooper Landing, Sterling, Nikiski,
Moose Pass, Bear Creek, Seward



State Capitol, Room 427
Juneau AK 99801-1182
907-465-4843
Fax: 907-465-3871
800-892-4843

Senator Cathy Giessel

SJR 16 Oppose Federal Aid to Certain Non-Profits Sponsor Statement

SJR 16 urges the federal government to stop providing funding to its federal agencies, which in turn, furnish grants to environmental nongovernmental organizations that use the money to fund efforts that oppose the development of Alaska's resources. It directs the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) to hire unbiased and independent firms to collect data and develop scientific reports to help them better manage their Alaska lands. SJR 16 also opposes any effort by the USF&WS to hinder or delay development of the state's natural resources by funding oppositional advocacy campaigns or legal counsel for these organizations opposing Alaska's resource development projects.

At statehood, it was evident that Alaska's small population would not be able to fund its necessary government services through taxation of its citizens. So the United States Congress included two measures in the statehood act to help pay for the fledgling state: The first measure set aside 225 million acres of land (60% of its land) in Alaska as federal land where 90% of the profits from mineral lease sales were to be given to the state. This, however, has not come to fruition, and that figure is now 40% as of January, 2014. The second measure allowed Alaska to select 104 million acres (28% of the total land in Alaska) of unreserved and unoccupied land for the state's use and development.

The early leaders of our state realized the importance of our resources and this is reflected in Alaska's Constitution. The Constitution encourages the settlement of its land and the development of its resources. In addition, the legislature is entrusted to ensure that the people receive the maximum benefit of the natural resources belonging to the state.

The USF&WS provides grants to environmental nongovernmental organizations that actively oppose resource development in Alaska. It is unconscionable, that taxpayer money could be funneled through federal offices and bureaus to fund groups and projects that contradict the rights and uses spelled out in the Alaska Statehood Act and the state's ability to be self-sustaining. Doesn't it seem ironic for Alaskans to pay taxes to the federal government to have it then turn around and use the money to hinder their economic advancement? Providing grants to these types of organizations is not an essential function of government, nor is it in the best interests of the citizens of Alaska.

Alaska has comprehensive and stringent regulations in place to ensure responsible development of our resources while protecting the environment. It is important to Alaskans and to our economy, that we maintain the ability to develop our own natural resources. This misuse of public money does a disservice to Alaskans who have made Alaska their home and jeopardizes our ability to be self-reliant as a state.

Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov