

Testimony of Gregory E. Conrad, Executive Director, Interstate Mining Compact Commission before the House Finance Committee re SB 2 – April 8, 2013

Good afternoon. My name is Gregory Conrad and I serve as Executive Director of the Interstate Mining Compact Commission. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of S.B. 2, a bill to authorize the state of Alaska to join the Compact as a full member state. As you know, Alaska has been an associate member of the Compact since 2006, during which time the state has had an opportunity to learn more about the benefits and services that IMCC provides to its member states. I believe you will hear [have heard] directly from a representative of the Department of Natural Resources about Alaska's experience to date, which I understand has been very positive. It is based on this experience that the state has chosen to move forward with the legislation that is necessary to bring the state into the Compact as a full member.

In today's legislative and regulatory climate in Washington, DC, it is more important than ever for state governments to be heard and their concerns understood. This is as true for mining issues and related environmental concerns as any other governmental matter, such as health care, transportation, infra-structure and budgets. IMCC is recognized by many in Washington, DC for our experience and expertise on mining issues. As an example, we have been requested to testify on behalf of the states at six congressional hearings in the House and Senate over the past couple of years on topics such as Good

Samaritan protections for hardrock abandoned mine cleanups, stream protection requirements for surface coal mining operations, hardrock financial assurance requirements under CERCLA, legislation to enhance funding for states to reclaim abandoned coal and hardrock mines, and the impacts of the federal budget on state grant programs. We have been consulted by the General Accountability Office and the National Academy of Sciences on a range of issues affecting the states. And we have also been asked to participate on advisory bodies, steering committees and state/federal teams on which our member states generally serve in order to insure their direct input.

As you will note from our annual report, a copy of which has been provided to you, IMCC is regularly called upon to provide its recommendations on a plethora of issues on Capitol Hill and before the federal regulatory agencies in DC. These recommendations are developed by the states at IMCC meetings and are communicated in the form of resolutions, testimony at congressional and federal agency hearings, formal comments on agency rulemakings, congressional staff briefings and state/federal meetings and task forces. Without the input of our member states, none of this would be possible. It is our ability to speak with one voice on common concerns that draws the states together and gives meaning to what we do.

The specific matter I would like to address with you today is why Alaska should become a full member. As with other state government organizations, it is the active participation and commitment of the full member states that carries the organization forward in terms of both

support and leadership. Upon becoming a full member through the enactment of legislation, the state of Alaska will have a formal vote in guiding the direction of the Compact. Alaska will also be in a position to chair the various standing committees of the Compact and to thereby help lead the Compact in directions that are favorable to both Alaska and the member states. Alaska will continue to enjoy the many other benefits to which it has been exposed over the past seven years, including access to all IMCC communications, meetings, programs, and initiatives.

Alaska's participation as a full member will also be recognized and understood by those who work with the Compact on a regular basis, including both the Congress and the federal agencies, and this brings a greater degree of recognition and influence regarding Alaska's participation in our work. IMCC's presence in Washington, DC allows us to monitor federal agency and congressional initiatives close to the action that might impact state primacy programs as well as developmental constraints on mineral resources. I believe that Alaska's participation in the organization opens avenues for the state to be heard in unique and valuable ways not otherwise available to it and to be supported with the clout that comes from 25 states speaking together as one voice. And since IMCC is focused solely on mining and related environmental protection issues with the federal government, we are able to delve deeper into the concerns that matter most to Alaska in this critical area of resource use and protection.

I know I speak for all of the member states of the Compact in encouraging the Committee to seriously consider and hopefully approve this legislation to bring Alaska in as our newest full member state. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have or provide additional information. Thanks for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing.