

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 7(FSH)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Offered: 2/6/15

Referred: Resources

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES EDGMON, Herron, Millett, Chenault, Stutes, Ortiz

A RESOLUTION

1 **Opposing the proposed designation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary.**

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

3 **WHEREAS**, in June of 2014, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
4 reestablished the process by which communities may submit applications to have the National
5 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration consider nominations of areas of the marine and
6 Great Lakes environments as national marine sanctuaries; and

7 **WHEREAS** the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has stated that
8 "every nomination starts at the community level"; and

9 **WHEREAS**, while the Sanctuary Nomination Process Guide published by the
10 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration calls for "community-based support for
11 the nomination," it also includes a definition of "communities" that is so broad it is essentially
12 meaningless; and

13 **WHEREAS**, in December of 2014, a collection of predominantly non-Alaska
14 organizations led by the Washington, D.C., based Public Employees for Environmental
15 Responsibility nominated an area of approximately 554,000 square nautical miles--nearly
16 equal to the entire landmass of the state--to be designated as the Aleutian Islands National

1 Marine Sanctuary; and

2 **WHEREAS** the designation of the proposed Aleutian Islands National Marine
3 Sanctuary would make permanent all current restrictions on fishing and other commerce and
4 would potentially authorize additional permanent restrictions that would prove burdensome to
5 present and future economic activity in the region; and

6 **WHEREAS** concerns noted in the nomination have been and are currently being
7 vigorously addressed through a variety of institutions and measures; and

8 **WHEREAS** 277,100 square nautical miles of the Aleutian Islands are already
9 designated as a habitat conservation area; and

10 **WHEREAS** fishing in the region has long been under the conscientious, effective
11 stewardship of local residents, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Alaska
12 Board of Fisheries, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Alaska Department of Fish
13 and Game; and

14 **WHEREAS** the Aleutian Islands are subject to the North Pacific Fishery Management
15 Council's Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan, which provides for heightened scientific
16 scrutiny to assess and enrich the health of the ecosystem, the sustainability of fisheries, and
17 the well-being of communities in the region; and

18 **WHEREAS** risks associated with shipping are being addressed through the ongoing
19 Aleutian Islands Risk Assessment, which includes the development of the Optimal Response
20 System to increase towing, salvage, and spill response capabilities in the region; and

21 **WHEREAS**, in December 2014, President Obama withdrew the 32,500,000-acre
22 North Aleutian Basin Planning Area from oil and gas leasing, and, in any case, oil and gas
23 development in the region is not feasible in the foreseeable future; and

24 **WHEREAS** strong Environmental Protection Agency regulations are already in place
25 to address potential issues involving invasive species; and

26 **WHEREAS**, at this time, the legislature is unaware of any support from local
27 communities, local tribes, or other local groups for the creation of an Aleutian Islands
28 National Marine Sanctuary; and

29 **WHEREAS**, in the wake of the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
30 nomination, the Aleutians East Borough Assembly, the City of Sand Point, the City of Adak,
31 the federally recognized Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove, the Akutan Traditional Council, the

1 King Cove Corporation, and the Akutan Corporation published official declarations of their
2 strong opposition to the creation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary; and

3 **WHEREAS**, on January 23, 2015, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
4 Administration informed Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility that the
5 nomination was not sufficient to warrant further consideration; however, the National Oceanic
6 and Atmospheric Administration also invited Public Employees for Environmental
7 Responsibility to revise and resubmit a nomination;

8 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature is vehemently opposed to the
9 nomination by the Washington, D.C., based Public Employees for Environmental
10 Responsibility, or any similar nomination, for the creation of an Aleutian Islands National
11 Marine Sanctuary.

12 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Penny Pritzker, United
13 States Secretary of Commerce; the Honorable Kathryn Sullivan, Ph.D., Under Secretary of
14 Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and National Oceanic and Atmospheric
15 Administration Administrator; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan
16 Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the
17 Alaska delegation in Congress.