

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3(CRA)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Offered: 3/11/15

Referred: Judiciary

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES EDGMON, Kreiss-Tomkins, Kito, Tuck

A RESOLUTION

- 1 **Urging members of the Alaska delegation to the United States Congress to introduce**
2 **substantially similar legislation to the Alaska Safe Families and Villages Act of 2013.**

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

4 **WHEREAS** the 229 federally recognized tribes in the state represent a vast
5 continuum of cultural legacies enriched by thousands of years of traditions and place-based
6 ways of life; and

7 **WHEREAS** many Alaska tribal communities face severe problems relating to
8 poverty, lack of economic opportunity, alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, and sexual
9 assault; and

10 **WHEREAS** the percentage of Alaska Natives living below the federal poverty
11 guideline is nearly twice the national average; and

12 **WHEREAS** the unemployment rate for Alaska Natives is dramatically higher than the
13 national average; and

14 **WHEREAS** the alcohol-related death rate for Alaska Natives has, in recent years,
15 been more than 16 times higher than the alcohol-related death rate for Caucasians; and

16 **WHEREAS** rural communities in the state have, in recent years, reported alarming

1 opioid, heroin, and methamphetamine abuse; and

2 **WHEREAS** Alaska Native women in rural communities have reported rates of
3 domestic violence multiple times higher than the national average; and

4 **WHEREAS** Alaska Native women suffer the highest rate of sexual assault of any
5 population in the United States, and the rate of sexual assault for Alaska Native children is six
6 times the national average; and

7 **WHEREAS**, while Alaska Natives represent 19 percent of the population of the state,
8 they make up 36 percent of Alaskans in prisons or jails; and

9 **WHEREAS**, in the past 25 years, state, federal, and joint commissions, task forces,
10 and committees established to address those issues have included the Alaska Natives
11 Commission, created in 1990; the Alaska Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Fairness
12 and Access, created in 1995; the Alaska Commission on Rural Governance and
13 Empowerment, created in 1998; the Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission,
14 created in 2004; the Indian Law and Order Commission, created in 2010; and the United
15 States Attorney General's Advisory Committee on American Indian and Alaska Native
16 Children Exposed to Violence, created in 2013; and

17 **WHEREAS** each of those bodies concluded that the current law enforcement and
18 justice systems alone have been unable to address and reduce crime, social ills, and
19 community distress adequately in rural Alaska; and

20 **WHEREAS** each of those bodies identified the need to strengthen the authority,
21 responsibility, and capacity of local tribal governments to administer public safety and justice
22 in their communities; and

23 **WHEREAS** many experts agree that greater control, better defined jurisdiction, and
24 increased accountability at the local level will lead to swifter response to violence and
25 criminal activity in communities, increased crime prevention, and increased rehabilitative,
26 rather than punitive, sentencing models; and

27 **WHEREAS**, in matters of jurisdiction and the delivery of justice at the local level,
28 having the state and Alaska Native tribes work together in an improved relationship will
29 benefit communities throughout Alaska; and

30 **WHEREAS** ambiguities in federal laws deprive Alaska tribes of jurisdictional tools to
31 make their communities safer and healthier; and

1 **WHEREAS** the original version of the Alaska Safe Families and Villages Act of
2 2013, which failed to pass the 113th United States Congress, included provisions to establish
3 a demonstration project under which a number of Alaska Native tribes would possess
4 enhanced authority over domestic violence and child abuse and neglect, greater local law
5 enforcement responsibilities to combat alcohol and drug abuse, increased federal funding for
6 development of their tribal courts and local law enforcement needs, and improved
7 coordination and communication among federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement
8 agencies;

9 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the members of the
10 Alaska delegation in the United States Congress to introduce legislation substantially similar
11 to the original Alaska Safe Families and Villages Act of 2013, reported to the Senate in the
12 First Regular Session of the 113th United States Congress.

13 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of
14 the United States; the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Vice-President of the United States and
15 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable John Boehner, Speaker of the U.S. House of
16 Representatives; the Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Majority Leader of the U.S. House of
17 Representatives; the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of
18 Representatives; the Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the
19 Honorable Harry Reid, Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate; and the Honorable Lisa
20 Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young,
21 U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.