

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE WES KELLER **DISTRICT 10**

SPONSOR STATEMENT

HJR 24

Urging the federal government to honor its commitments to transfer land to the state; and urging the United States Secretary of the Interior and the United States Congress to adhere to the recommendations of the United States Department of the Interior in its 2006 report under the Alaska Land Transfer Acceleration Act, including lifting withdrawals.

The time for studies needs to come to an end. Since the 70's the federal government has been studying land in Alaska for classification. This "study hall" so to speak means Alaska's lands are restricted. We thought relief was coming with the introduction and passage of ANILCA, specifically Sections 101(d) and 1326(a) & (b) it didn't.

ANILCA permitted "top-filing" to indicate Alaska's future interests in land withdrawn for potential transfer to the state. Those interests cannot be final until the withdrawals are released. To date that has not happened.

HJR 24 unfortunately is similar to other language asking the federal government to abide by decisions that were made at statehood and repeatedly reaffirmed by congressional language. The Secretary of Interior has an obligation to end this moratorium. It reaffirms reports that more than 150 million acres of land no longer needs to be studied.

HJR 24 demands for Alaska what was promised without further interference. It makes it clear that we understand what is right within our sovereign borders. It sends a clear message to Washington that this 50 year old chapter needs to be closed so we can move forward.

HJR 24 addresses the issue with straight language to resolve a complicated bureaucratic issue. It politely asks for resolution without the need for litigation.

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