

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 9

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES ORTIZ, Kreiss-Tomkins, Tuck, Tarr

Introduced: 1/30/17

Referred: House Special Committee on Fisheries, Resources

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES ORTIZ, Kreiss-Tomkins, Tuck, Tarr, Parish

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the United States government to continue to work with the government of**
2 **Canada to investigate the long-term, region-wide downstream effects of proposed and**
3 **existing industrial development and to develop measures to ensure that state resources**
4 **are not harmed by upstream development in British Columbia.**

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

6 **WHEREAS** the transboundary rivers of Northwest British Columbia and Southeast
7 Alaska have tremendous unique economic, ecological, subsistence, cultural, and recreational
8 value; and

9 **WHEREAS** protecting productive, pristine waters and intact habitats throughout
10 those transboundary river systems is necessary to ensure healthy wild salmon populations and
11 abundant fisheries; and

12 **WHEREAS** large-scale mining in British Columbia is experiencing unprecedented
13 and rapid expansion within the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk watersheds; and

14 **WHEREAS** proposed mines in the transboundary area include Tulsequah Chief, New
15 Polaris, and Big Bull in the Taku watershed; Galore Creek, Red Chris, and Schaft Creek in the

1 Stikine watershed; and the Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell project in the headwaters of the Unuk
2 River; and

3 **WHEREAS** large-scale mining and energy development could have significant
4 adverse effects on the environment and fisheries within the transboundary region; and

5 **WHEREAS** the proposed mines would generate billions of tons of acid-generating
6 tailings, which would be held behind huge dams and could pose the threat of acid rock
7 drainage for centuries, if not in perpetuity; and

8 **WHEREAS** the tailings would need monitoring, maintenance, water treatment, and
9 possible remediation for centuries, if not in perpetuity; and

10 **WHEREAS** ongoing acid rock drainage at the Tulsequah Chief mine and the tailings
11 dam failure at the Mount Polley mine demonstrate weaknesses in current monitoring and
12 enforcement efforts in British Columbia; and

13 **WHEREAS** the federal-provincial environmental assessment process does not
14 address the long-term, cumulative effects of industrial development in the transboundary
15 region; and

16 **WHEREAS** commercial fishermen, subsistence and recreational users, elected
17 leaders, local communities, and Alaska Native and First Nation tribes on both sides of the
18 Alaska-Canada border have raised concerns about the pace and scope of the proposed
19 industrial development in the headwaters of the transboundary river systems and the potential
20 for harm to water quality, fish and wildlife, and the socio-economic sustainability of local
21 communities in the region;

22 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature strongly urges the United States
23 government to continue to work with the government of Canada to investigate the long-term,
24 region-wide downstream effects of proposed and existing industrial development and to
25 develop measures to ensure that state resources are not harmed by upstream development in
26 British Columbia.

27 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the United States Secretary of State; and
28 the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the
29 Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.