

TO: The Alaska State Legislature  
FROM: Alaskans concerned about climate change

May 3, 2017

Dear AK Legislator,

We, the undersigned urge you to support HB173<sup>1</sup>, establishing a Climate Change Response Commission through a surcharge on oil produced in Alaska.

***Climate change is impacting Alaska profoundly and at an alarming rate.*** Rising temperatures twice exceeding lower latitudes<sup>2</sup> are triggering cascading effects<sup>3</sup>, including large scale coastal flooding and erosion, permafrost melt, the dramatic retreat of glacial and sea ice, ocean acidification and marked increases in the scale, frequency and intensity of wildfires. Other impacts include an increase in toxic algae blooms, shifting fisheries, the invasive of new species and the landscape scale redistribution of biodiversity<sup>4</sup> leading to significant ecological changes. Cumulatively, these effects are threatening Alaska's public health, subsistence life-ways, infrastructure and economy.

***Alaskans know climate change***<sup>5</sup>. We have deep connections to the land and sea that extend back many generations. While we are accustomed to the vagaries of extreme seasonal weather patterns and natural fluctuations, the changes Alaskans now see are unprecedented even in the oral history of Alaska Natives<sup>6</sup>.

***The trends are not encouraging.*** Every year since 2014 has been record-breaking. This fall temperatures soared 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit) above normal across large stretches of the Arctic Ocean<sup>7</sup>. At least 14 communities around the state recorded their highest average temperatures ever<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> HB 173: Climate Change Commission. 30th Legislature (2017-2018).  
<http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/30?Root=HB%20173>

<sup>2</sup> National Climate Assessment, U.S. Global Change Research Program, Alaska.  
<http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/#section-1946>

<sup>3</sup> Kazmierczak, Jeanette. In Alaska's 'last frontier,' climate change provides new horizons for invasive species. *NASA Global Climate Change*, July 7, 2015. <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/2306/in-alaskas-last-frontier-climate-change-provides-new-horizons-for-invasive-species/>

<sup>4</sup> Welch, Craig. Half of All Species Are on the Move – And We're Feeling It. *National Geographic*. April 27, 2017. Report on new scientific study by G. T. Peci et al., *Science* 355, eaai9214 (2017). DOI: 10.1126/science.aai9214.  
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/04/climate-change-species-migration-disease/>

<sup>5</sup> Alaskans Know Climate Change Project: <http://www.alaskansknowclimatechange.com/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> Moerlein, K.J. and C. Carothers. 2012. Total Environment of Change: Impacts of Climate Change and Social Transitions on Subsistence Fisheries in Northeast Alaska. *Ecology and Society*. Vol. 17, No. 1. Art. 10.  
<https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol17/iss1/art10/>

<sup>7</sup> Vidal, John. 'Extraordinarily hot' Arctic temperatures alarm scientists. *The Guardian*, Nov. 22, 2015.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/nov/22/extraordinarily-hot-arctic-temperatures-alarm-scientists>

<sup>8</sup> Essig, Blake. 2016 shatters record for Alaska's warmest year. *KTUU*, Jan. 2, 2017.  
<http://www.ktuu.com/content/news/2016--409402135.html>

***The failure to act on climate change is hurting Alaskans.*** Below are some, but certainly not all of the ways climate change is affecting our people, communities and environment:

- Nearly 15 years ago the General Accounting Office reported that flooding and coastal erosion threatens 184 out of 213 or 86% of Alaska's Native villages<sup>9</sup>. Kivalina, Koyukuk, Newtok and Shishmaref are in "imminent danger" and still, no action has been taken
- Glaciers across Alaska are melting and reducing in mass, including Eklutna glacier that provides municipal water and hydropower for our most populous city, Anchorage. Recent studies predict that Eklutna could disappear this century or sooner<sup>10</sup>
- Arctic sea ice reached a record minimum for the third straight year and the lowest maximum in the 38-year satellite record, on March 7th of this year<sup>11</sup>. Increased wind and waves, thinning ice, Polar bear behavior changes and increased shipping activity are having profound effects on Alaska's coastal communities
- Warmer, more acidic, less oxygen-rich waters along the West Coast have increased the occurrence of harmful algal blooms, affecting shellfish harvests and possibly causing the largest marine-mammal<sup>12</sup> and seabird mortality events ever recorded in the state<sup>13</sup>
- A marked increase in the frequency, intensity and scale of wildfires. More than 5 million acres burned in 2015, destroying a main buffer against climate change: the carbon-rich boreal forests, tundra and permafrost that serve as vital carbon sinks<sup>14</sup>
- Significant infrastructure (building, airport, railroad and pipeline) damage from near-surface permafrost thaw that could cost the state \$5.5 billion this century<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Alaska Native Villages: Most Are Affected by Flooding and Erosion, but Few Qualify for Federal Assistance. United States General Accounting Office, Report to Congressional Committees. December 2003. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04142.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Rosen, Yereth. Eklutna Glacier, a source of Anchorage drinking water, is disappearing drip by drip. *Alaska Daily News*. Feb. 19, 2017. <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/environment/2017/02/19/eklutna-glacier-source-of-anchorage-water-is-dripping-away-but-oh-so-slowly/>

<sup>11</sup> Another record, but a somewhat cooler Arctic Ocean. Arctic Sea Ice News & Analysis. National Snow and Ice Data Center, April 11, 2017. <http://nsidc.org/arcticseaicenews/>

<sup>12</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events. <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/mmume/events.html>

<sup>13</sup> Doherty, Sierra. Common Murre Update: Growing Awareness of Sea Bird Die-off Thanks to Citizen Reporting. *Alaska Fish and Wildlife News*. [http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildlifeneews.view\\_article&articles\\_id=770](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildlifeneews.view_article&articles_id=770)

<sup>14</sup> Milman, Oliver. One quarter of Alaska permafrost could melt by 2100 – US Geological Survey. *The Guardian*, Dec. 9, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/09/alaska-permafrost-melting-us-geological-survey-study>

<sup>15</sup> Melvin, A. M., Larsen, P. et al. Climate change damages to Alaska public infrastructure and the economics of proactive adaptation. *PNAS*. Nov. 9, 2016. <http://www.pnas.org/content/114/2/E122.full.pdf>

- Hundreds of thousands of caribou, musk ox, moose and ice seals perished when unseasonal rain-on-snow locked browse beneath a layer of ice and destroyed snowy nursery lairs needed for survival<sup>16</sup>

*The evidence is clear and overwhelming* and the time for action is *now*.

HB 173 will restart the important work of the State in addressing climate change, financed appropriately by the industry that has benefitted the most from its cause: the production and burning of fossil fuel<sup>17</sup>.

Given the scale and intensity of impacts, the small \$0.02 surcharge per barrel of oil produced on State lands proposed by HB173, while an important start, isn't sufficient to support the work that is needed to fully address climate change issues in Alaska. We urge you to make the following amendments:

1. Direct the Commission to prepare a comprehensive Alaska Climate Change Adaptation Plan and detailed implementation timeline within 2 years,
2. Expand Commission representation to include three NGO representatives with expertise in climate change and one member each from Fairbanks Borough, Denali Borough, Southeast Fairbanks census area and Yukon-Koyukuk census area,
3. Convene an annual statewide conference on climate change co-organized with Alaskan NGOs working on climate and energy issues and open to members of the public,
4. Increase the per barrel surcharge to \$0.50 in ensure that the Commission has the capacity to fulfill its directives. The proposed \$0.02 surcharge is wholly insufficient.

State action on climate change is long overdue. HB173 is a small, but extremely necessary step to head off enormous impacts to all sectors of Alaska's economy. If we act decisively now, Alaska can not only avert the worst case scenarios, we can spark innovation across the state and drive a new energy transition that paves the way to a sustainable future for Alaskans.

We urge you to support, strengthen, expand and build on this important legislation, posthaste.

Sincerely,

1. Ceal Smith, Chair, AK Climate Caucus/Founder, AK Climate & Energy Action Network (AK CLEAN), Eagle River, AK 99577
2. Bjorn Olsen, Alaskans Know Climate Change Education Campaign, Kachemak Bay Conservation Society, Homer, AK. *For a state warming more than twice as fast as the rest of the US, it seems entirely unreasonable to not have a branch of government following, studying, and advising on climate change.*
3. Mark Gutman, Chukchi Sea Watch, Talkeetna, AK 99676
4. Danielle Redman, Renewable Juneau, Juneau, AK
5. Tristan Glowa, Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, Fairbanks, AK
6. Eric Schaeztle, AK CLEAN/Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, Fairbanks, AK 99708

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<sup>16</sup> Rosen, Yereth. Rain on snow takes a toll on wildlife and the natural environment in the far north. <https://www.adn.com/arctic/article/rain-snow-takes-toll-wildlife-and-natural-environment-far-north/2014/02/02/>

<sup>17</sup> Causes of Climate Change, Climate Change Science, US Environmental Protection Agency website: <https://www.epa.gov/climate-change-science/causes-climate-change>

7. Kerry Williams, Vice Chair, Alaska Climate Caucus/AK CLEAN, Eagle River, AK
8. Princess Lucaj, Fairbanks, AK
9. Callan Chythlook Sifsok, Girdwood, AK 99587
10. Martha Itta, Tribal Administrator, Native Village of Nuiqsut, AK
11. Wilson Justin, AK Climate Caucus, Chistochina, AK 99586
12. Kendra Zamzow, Chickaloon, AK 99674 *Governor Walker should directly appoint a science-policy advisor with strong understanding of the drivers and impacts of climate change on Alaska to be an official advisor to him within the office of the Governor. I support HB173 as an addition to a Governor's advisor.*
13. Margaret Stock, Attorney, Cascadia Cross Border Law Group, Anchorage, AK
14. Brent Watkins, Vice Chair Alaska Democrats, member DNC, AK Climate Caucus, Kodiak, AK 99615
15. D'Arcy Hutchings, AK Climate Caucus, Anchorage, AK 99508
16. Pamela Miller, Ex Director, Alaska Community Action on Toxics, Anchorage, AK 99508
17. Libby Roderick, Turtle Island Records, Anchorage, AK 99508
18. Caroline Cannon, AK CLEAN, Point Hope, AK
19. Nick Moe, Spenard, AK 99503
20. Rev. Dr. Curtis Karns, Presbytery of Yukon, Eagle River, AK 99577
21. Vick Briggs, Alaska Food Policy Council, King Salmon, AK 99613
22. Cynthia Wentworth, Passenger Rail for Commuters, Anchorage, AK 99540
23. Alyson Pytte, 49 Moons, Anchorage, AK
24. Malinda Chase, AK CLEAN, Fairbanks, AK 99708
25. Shoshanah Stone, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
26. Susan Sommer, Alaskans Stronger Together, Palmer, AK
27. Cameron Cowles, Our Revolution Alaska, AK
28. Joshua Spring, AK Climate Caucus, Alaska Young Dem Volunteer Corp, Anchorage, AK
29. Pete LaFrance, Palmer City Council, Palmer, AK 99645
30. Stephen Greenlaw, Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, Fairbanks, AK 99708
31. Cindee Karnes, Cold Climate Permaculture, Eagle River, AK 99577
32. Brandon Nakasato, AK Climate Caucus, Anchorage, AK
33. Dave Musgrave, Indivisible Alaska, Palmer, AK
34. Chase Stoudt, Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, Fairbanks, AK 99708
35. Kate Smith-Utley, AK Climate Caucus, Fairbanks, AK 99708
36. Patricia Rivera, Institute of Marine Science, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, AK 99709
37. Susan Todd, AK Climate Caucus, Fairbanks, AK 99709
38. Deirdre Coval, AK Climate Caucus, Soldotna, AK
39. Scott Maxwell, AK Climate Caucus, Anchorage, AK
40. Dave Scott, AK CLEAN, AK Climate Caucus, Auke Bay, AK
41. Ed Wesley, Anchorage, AK 99501
42. Derek Reed, Anchorage Democrats President, AK Climate Caucus, Anchorage, AK 99504
43. Elizabeth Manning, 907 Hub, Anchorage, AK 99501
44. Kevin D. McGee, NAACP, Anchorage, AK 99504. *"We have but one earth, stop the rush to destroy it"*
45. Sally Russell Cox, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
46. Kathleen Menke, AK CLEAN, Haines, AK 99827
47. Alfredo Bolivar, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
48. Katie Kennedy, Save the Kenai, Ninilchik, AK 99639. *Given the accelerated rate of methane gas from melting permafrost, loss of ice fields and glaciers, it makes sense for Alaska to be a leading scientific state on climate change. We need to stop extraction of fossil fuels to achieve this goal and be leaders on the most important topic of our time.*

49. Amy Christiansen, AK CLEAN, Homer, AK
50. Cyndy Earnshaw, AK CLEAN, Eagle River, AK 99577
51. McKibben Jackinsky, AK CLEAN, Homer, AK 99603
52. Robin Solfisburg, Take Action Skagway, Skagway, AK
53. Philip-Robin Clark, Take Action Skagway, Skagway, AK
54. Judy Williams, March on Alaska, Eagle River, AK
55. Chris Prussing, AK CLEAN, Juneau, AK
56. Donna Marie, Alaskans Stronger Together/Indivisible Alaska, Wasilla, AK 99654
57. Lila Vogt, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99517 *Lifetime Alaskan*
58. Lydia Darby, Anchorage, AK 99503
59. Oliver Schiess, AK Climate Caucus, Eagle River, AK 99577
60. Constance Fredenberg, Palmer, AK
61. Andria Bond, AK CLEAN, Salcha, AK
62. Jill Missal, Anchorage, AK
63. Stacy Koster, Wasilla, AK
64. Suzanne McCausland, AK. *Climate change is threatening our children, and grandchildren. We must take responsibility and action now.*
65. April Wisebaker, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage, AK
66. Christina Peterson, Fairbanks, AK. *I'd like to see us pursue an industry for Climate study in Alaska, as well as renewable and independent energy production.*
67. Cheryl Lovegreen, Indivisible Alaska, Anchorage, AK
68. Anke Kelly, Indivisible Alaska, Anchorage, AK
69. Chandra McGee, Indivisible Alaska, Fairbanks, AK
70. Anne Green, Indivisible Alaska, Anchorage, AK
71. Amy Dalton, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage, AK
72. Amy Jackson, Concerned Citizen, Kenai, AK 99611
73. Wendy Alward, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99508
74. David Cheezem, Co-owner Fireside Books, Palmer, AK
75. Chelsea Vukovich, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage, AK
76. Barbara McDaniel, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
77. Leanna Heffner, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
78. Bhree Roumagoux, 907 Hub, Anchorage, AK
79. Sonja Barnard, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99507
80. Tracy Anna Bader, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99515
81. Tyler Fox, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99577
82. Rosemary Reynolds, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99515
83. Courtney Brown, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99508
84. Alex Lopez, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99505
85. Lesa Hollen, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99505
86. Patrick Hanson, AK Standing Up, Gustavus, AK 99826
87. Tricia Elliott, Indivisible Alaska, Anchorage, AK 99516
88. Sandra Calvillo, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99504
89. Barbara Johnson, Indivisible Alaska, Chugiak, AK 99567
90. Dana Markey, Alaskan Native, MS 64040
91. Judy Macnak, Renewable Juneau, Juneau, AK 99801
92. Michelle Schmidt, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage 99502
93. Stacey Fritz, AK CLEAN, Fairbanks, AK
94. Denise Atwood, Alaskans Stronger Together, Seward, AK 99664
95. Simon Vansintjan, Take Action Skagway, Skagway, AK 99840
96. Donna Braendel, AK CLEAN, Chickaloon, AK 99674

97. Danielle Stickman, Eagle River, AK 99577
98. Breanna Walker, Student, University of Alaska Southeast, Juneau, AK 99801
99. Katie McCaffrey, Geography & Environmental Studies, University of Alaska Southeast, Juneau, AK 99801
100. Camilla Hussein, AK CLEAN, University of Anchorage, Eagle River, AK
101. Ali Stover, University of Anchorage, Anchorage, AK 99502
102. Kelly Musgraves, North Pole, AK 99705
103. Liliane Ulukivaiola, engineering student, University of Fairbanks, Fairbanks, AK 99504
104. Sylvester D. Mazen Jr., Homer, AK 99603
105. Catherine Shenk, Anchorage, AK 99501
106. Randi Gill, AK Climate Caucus, Anchorage, AK 99502
107. Sharon Alden, Fairbanks, AK 99712
108. Sean McGuire, Fairbanks, AK 99712
109. Rocco Haro, University of Anchorage, Anchorage, AK 99515
110. Celia Crossett, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage, AK 99507. *It's important to fund good evidence-based climate practices. Please support this initiative!*
111. Susan C. Klein, Anchorage, AK 99508
112. Antonia Fiflis-Fowler, Anchorage, AK 99507
113. Mari Jamieson, Educator, Anchorage, AK 99503
114. Patty Ginsburg, Anchorage, AK 99508
115. Scott Hayden, Anchorage, AK 99515
116. Myra Scholze, Sierra Club Alaska Chapter, Kodiak, AK 99615
117. Annemieke Powers, Palmer, AK 99645
118. Lea Harkrider, Eagle River, AK 99577
119. Catherine Shenk, AK CLEAN, AK 99501
120. John Barton, Anchorage, AK
121. Andria Bond, Anchorage AK
122. Penny Kaye McClain, Kasilof, AK 99610
123. Michael Fenster, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
124. Carol Schuldt, Sterling, AK 99672
125. Sharon Hale, Soldotna, AK 99669
126. Bonnie Nichols, Soldotna, AK 99669
127. Candace Cahill, Take Action Skagway, Skagway, AK 99840
128. Jennifer Cesar, Anchorage, AK 99517
129. Michele Vasquez, Many Voices, Shared Vision Soldotna, AK 99669
130. Lisa Sinnott, Chugiak, AK 99567
131. Bob Braunstein, Environmental Consultant, Eagle River, AK 99577
132. Eric Lee, AK CLEAN, Petersberg, AK
133. Jeannine Haney, March on Fairbanks, Fairbanks, AK 99709
134. Barbara Ward, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage, AK 99503
135. Lydia Johnson, Anchorage 99501
136. Bridget Paule, Anchorage, AK 99503
137. Sara Dykstra, Anchorage, AK 99508
138. Heidi Chay, Kenai Change, Kenai, AK 99611
139. Jennifer McCard, Soldotna, AK 99669
140. Scott Gruhn, Anchorage, AK 99507
141. Barbara Johnson, Indivisible Alaska, Chugiak, AK
142. Christy Everett, Indivisible Alaska, North Pole, AK
143. Michelle Schuman Indivisible Alaska, Sutton, AK
144. Mark Clark, Indivisible Alaska, Sutton, AK

145. Stephanie Warnock, Indivisible Alaska, Anchorage, AK
146. Steve Nazaroff, Indivisible Anchorage, AK
147. John Lutterman, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK
148. Cheryl Humme, Barrow, AK 99723
149. Yvonne Leutwyler, Homer, AK 99603
150. Amy Utley, Anchorage, AK 99502. *It is irresponsible and unforgivable to ignore something as critical as climate change. We see the impact in Alaska first-hand. We need to act now.*
151. Susan Soule, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99507
152. Forrest Simpson, University of Alaska, Anchorage, AK 99516
153. Georgine Stover, Anchorage, AK 99502
154. Barry Stover, Anchorage, AK 99502
155. Matt Moore, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99507
156. Nancy Caudill, Anchorage, AK 99517
157. Marilyn Wheelless, Kenai, AK 99611
158. Sanne Berrig, Anchorage, AK 99501
159. George Kapolchok, Anchorage, AK
160. Michael Fenster, AK CLEAN, Anchorage, AK 99515
161. Laurie Murdock, Kodiak, AK. *Please act now.*
162. Kalie Harrison, AK CLEAN, Girdwood, AK 99587
163. Mickie Montoya, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage, AK 99507. *Our environment is degrading on a daily basis. We see the signs as clearly as our own faces. We have to put our environment and climate as a top priority. Ignoring the facts doesn't change them. We have to take action now -- it's already past a point of return in some areas. When will we do what's right instead of what's easy or not profitable? We are the stewards of this planet and it's time we remember that our children and grandchildren will bare the brunt of our lack of action. What will we tell them when they look to us for answers? We didn't know? We didn't care! Or it was too hard? Do what's right and protect our planet. Support HB 173.*
164. Carrie Ann Nash, Alaskans Stronger Together, Fairbanks, AK 99709
165. Linda Reagan, Alaskan's Stronger Together, Indian, AK 99540
166. James Tinius, Alaskan's Stronger Together, Eagle River, AK 99577. *Concerned about climate change.*
167. Shawn Proudfoot, Alaskans Stronger Together, Anchorage, AK 99501
168. TJ Bredehoft, Alaskans Stronger Together, Ketchikan, AK 99901
169. Deborah Limacher, AK CLEAN, Homer, AK 99603
170. Hosanna Heartsong, Alaskans Stronger Together, Soldotna, AK
171. Susan Kay, AK Climate Caucus, Wasilla, AK

*Cc: Alaska Governor Bill Walker, Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott*

*Submitted on May 3, 2017. We will continue to gather signatures and submit periodic updates to the governor and legislature until HB173, or preferably a stronger bill, is successfully adopted.*

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Submitted to the following committee chairs and co-chairs:

[House State Affairs Committee](#)

Chair, Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Representative.Jonathan.Kreiss-Tomkins@akleg.gov, 907-465-3732

Vice-Chair, Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux, Representative.Gabrielle.LeDoux@akleg.gov, 907-465-4998

[House Resources Committee](#)

Chair, Rep. Andy Josephson (sponsor), Representative.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov, 907-465-4939

Co-Chair, Rep. Geran Tarr (co-sponsor), Representative.Geran.Tarr@akleg.gov, 907-465-3424

[House Finance Committee](#)

Co-Chair, Rep. Neal Foster, Representative.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov, 907-465-3789

Co-Chair, Rep. Paul Seaton, Representative.Paul.Seaton@akleg.gov, 907-465-2689

Vice-Chair, Rep. Les Gara, Representative.Les.Gara@akleg.gov, 907-465-2647