



KAWERAK, INC.

REPRESENTING

Brevig Mission

Sitaisaq

Council

Diomedea

Injaliq

Elim

Niviarcaurluq

Gambell

Sivuqaq

Golovin

Chinik

King Island

Ugiuvak

Koyuk

Kuuyuk

Mary's Igloo

Qawiaraq

Nome Eskimo

Sitnasuak Inuit

Savoonga

Sivungaq

Shaktoolik

Saktuliq

Shishmaref

Qikiqtaq

Solomon

Anuutaq

St. Michael

Taciq

Stebbins

Tapraq

Teller

Tala

Unalakleet

Unalaqtiq

Wales

Kinjigin

White Mountain

Igakuik /

Nutchirviq

Sent Via Electronic Mail

April 12, 2019

Senator Shelley Hughes, Chair

Alaska Legislature

Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: **Opposition to SJR 3**

Dear Senator Hughes:

Kawerak, Inc. is a Native non-profit consortium providing a wide range of services throughout Nome and the outer-lying communities within the Bering Strait region. The Board of Directors of Kawerak is comprised of the Presidents of the 20 federally recognized tribal governments in this region, a representative from our sister tribal health care organization, Norton Sound Health Corporation, and two Elder representatives. This correspondence is submitted on behalf of the Kawerak, Inc. Board of Directors following our recent Board meeting, in opposition to Senate Joint Resolution 3(SJR3).

Kawerak's provision of services includes representation in Child in Need of Aid/Indian Child Welfare Act matters. We also own and operate a Child Advocacy Center which provides a child friendly environment for investigation of child abuse and neglect cases through a Multi-Disciplinary Team approach, and which also works closely with Law Enforcement, the Office of Children's Services, and the Alaska Court System. We are very involved, therefore, with the Alaska judicial system in our region and state-wide.

SJR 3 seeks to amend the State Constitution to alter the selection process of the Alaska Judicial Council (the Council) by requiring legislative confirmation of the three attorney members of the Council. Kawerak strongly opposes SJR 3 for the following reasons:

- The current selection process was chosen by the framers of the Alaska Constitution specifically so that selection of the Council would remain merit based, and not subject to political considerations. SJR 3 will be detrimental to the process, and to rural Alaska—we advocate continuing to have a merit based process as free from the politics of the moment as possible. We want and expect judges to be chosen based on their fairness, impartiality, integrity, and competence, with consideration from the communities in which they will be presiding.

KAWERAK, INC.

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Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.

- Almost without exception, over the last 30 years the lawyer-appointees and public-appointees have worked in partnership and come to a consensus on their decisions with respect to judicial appointments. The current selection process for Council members works, and has produced a good mix of individuals who work well together. There is no problem that needs to be fixed in the first place.

We request that our opposition to SJR 3 be noted in the record and included in Committee packets for this hearing, and that you vote against this legislation.

Please do not vote to alter the selection process for the Alaska Judicial Council so that it is subject to whichever way the political winds are blowing at any given time, in order to fix a problem that does not exist.

Sincerely,
KAWERAK, INC.



Frank Katchatag
Chair, Kawerak Board of Directors

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