

STATE OF ALASKA THE LEGISLATURE

2018

Source

SCS CSHCR 19(RLS) am S

**Legislative
Resolve No.**

35



Urging Governor Bill Walker to recognize a linguistic emergency.

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

WHEREAS the state is home to 20 officially recognized Alaska Native languages, Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, Alutiiq, Unanga̋, Dena'ina, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich'in, Tanana, Upper Tanana, Tanacross, Hän, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian, alongside English; and

WHEREAS House Bill No. 216, enacted as ch. 116, SLA 2014, signed into law by Governor Sean Parnell, adding the 20 Alaska Native languages to the official languages of the state, was the culmination of hundreds of hours of effort by legislators, Alaska Natives, and others; and

WHEREAS Senate Bill No. 130, enacted as ch. 48, SLA 2012, signed into law by Governor Sean Parnell, established the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council to advise both the governor and legislature on programs, policies, and projects to provide for the cost-effective preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages in the state; and

WHEREAS the state is in critical danger of losing those languages and, according to

the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council, the state may lose the last fluent speakers of all 20 Alaska Native languages by the end of the 21st century if current rates of language loss continue as they have since the 1970s; and

WHEREAS one Alaska Native language, Eyak, lost its last fluent speaker in 2008; and

WHEREAS 50 years of research shows that early, total language immersion education for English speakers increases academic proficiency in both English and the immersion language, as well as in other academic subjects; and

WHEREAS indigenous peoples should be able to provide education in the peoples' own languages in a manner that is appropriate to the peoples' cultural methods of teaching and learning; and

WHEREAS language is an important element of culture, and the use of Alaska Native languages can strengthen Alaska Native culture in a mutually reinforcing cycle;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature urges the Governor, the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council, and other state agencies to work expeditiously and actively with the legislature and Alaska Native organizations to ensure the survival and continued use of all 20 of the state's Alaska Native languages; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature encourages the Governor, in cooperation with the legislature, to work with Alaska Native organizations to initiate and strengthen, as appropriate, legislative and policy measures that prioritize the survival and continued use of Alaska Native languages; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature urges Governor Bill Walker to recognize a linguistic emergency.