

STATE OF ALASKA THE LEGISLATURE

2017

Source
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**Legislative
Resolve No.**
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Expressing the Alaska State Legislature's support and appreciation for legislation introduced by the state's congressional delegation that would allow for the construction of a single-lane gravel road through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, connecting the community of King Cove with the Cold Bay Airport; and urging the United States Congress to pass the legislation.

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

WHEREAS the short gravel airstrip at King Cove is unusable for 100 days a year, on average, because of the high winds and poor visibility typical of the severe storms that are commonplace in the region; and

WHEREAS the Cold Bay Airport is located less than 30 miles from King Cove and boasts the third largest runway in the state and also includes a cross-wind runway and an instrument approach system for foul weather; and

WHEREAS, if a person in King Cove suffers a serious medical emergency, the limited medical facilities in the community and in Cold Bay require that the person be flown to Anchorage, which is more than 600 miles away; and

WHEREAS, over the past three decades, several small planes have crashed, 11 individuals have perished during flights into or out of King Cove, and eight lives have been lost because of weather hindering the transportation of sick or injured King Cove residents to medical facilities in Anchorage in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS the weather conditions that frequently make flying perilous or impossible often render medical evacuations by boat between King Cove and Cold Bay perilous or impossible as well; and

WHEREAS, even in fair weather, medical evacuations by boat expend precious amounts of time and are complicated by inadequate docking facilities at Cold Bay that sometimes require patients to be hoisted more than 20 feet from a boat's deck to the dock; and

WHEREAS, for more than 30 years, community members and tribal leaders of King Cove have campaigned for a safe and reliable road crossing the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge to the all-weather Cold Bay Airport; and

WHEREAS Senator Lisa Murkowski included a provision in the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 that allowed for the exchange of federal and nonfederal land in the state for the construction of a road between King Cove and Cold Bay; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, the Alaska State Legislature concurred with this provision in the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 by unanimously approving the proposed land exchange and road construction; and

WHEREAS, even though the 12.5 miles of single-lane gravel road to cross the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge would require only a 206-acre corridor representing just 0.06 percent of the 315,000-acre refuge, former Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell, announced on December 23, 2015, that she refused to make a determination that the road is in the public interest; and

WHEREAS, since the former secretary's announcement, 55 additional emergency medical evacuations, 17 of which had to be performed by the United States Coast Guard, have occurred between King Cove and Cold Bay, further demonstrating the necessity for a road link between the communities; and

WHEREAS S. 101 and H.R. 218, introduced, respectively, by Senator Lisa Murkowski and Representative Don Young, would ensure continuing federal legislative authority for this long-awaited, lifesaving undertaking;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature expresses its profound support and appreciation for S. 101, sponsored by Senator Lisa Murkowski and cosponsored by Senator Dan Sullivan, and H.R. 218, sponsored by Representative Don Young; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully and strongly urges the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives to pass these measures swiftly and make possible the dramatic improvement to life and safety that the residents of King Cove have sought for decades.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and all other members of the 115th United States Congress.