

STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE

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Legislative
Resolve No.

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Urging the federal government to recognize the dire water and sanitation conditions in rural Alaska and to become a full partner with this state in improving this health-threatening situation.

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

WHEREAS Alaskans living in over 135 rural communities throughout the state have substandard and inadequate water and sewer facilities; and

WHEREAS this lack of basic facilities results in many of these rural Alaskans having to drink untreated water from ponds, creeks, or rivers and having to use a bucket as a toilet or an outhouse as a bathroom facility; and

WHEREAS this lack of basic facilities often results in uncontained sewage pooling in close vicinity to homes, in liquid wastes leaching into the waters used for drinking, and in exposing children to raw sewage in their play areas; and

WHEREAS this lack of basic facilities is causing a critical human health and safety crisis in rural Alaska as evidenced by an alarmingly high incidence of potentially life-threatening diseases, such as hepatitis A and meningitis; and

WHEREAS Alaska's rural population is projected to double by the year 2010, further

compounding this health crisis and exposing many rural residents to diseases that would be preventable with basic sanitation facilities; and

WHEREAS rural Alaska has a history of cycles of waterborne disease epidemics stemming from unsafe water and sanitation systems, and state epidemiologists report hepatitis A is currently beginning another new cycle of that disease; and

WHEREAS the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development continues to design and build homes in rural Alaska without adequate provision for safe sewage disposal or in-home drinking water; and

WHEREAS the commissioner of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation established the Alaska Sanitation Task Force, consisting of 27 federal, state, Native, and regional organizations, to analyze these important issues and provide recommendations for action; and

WHEREAS the implementation of the recommendations of the Alaska Sanitation Task Force involves the joint commitment of the state, local and federal governments to improve the living standards, public health, and quality of life of rural Alaskans; and

WHEREAS the governor has directed the commissioner of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and commissioners of other affected state departments to use their best efforts to utilize available resources to address this critical health problem; and

WHEREAS the Alaska State Legislature recognizes the important work done by the Alaska Sanitation Task Force and urges early implementation of the task force's findings and recommendations by the state government in partnership with the federal government, local government, Native regional nonprofit corporations, and others to address these challenges; and

WHEREAS this state effort will not be successful without the commitment of the federal government to meet its responsibilities and obligations to these rural residents, many of whom are Alaska Natives; and

WHEREAS the federal government, through the United States Environmental Protection Agency, has the capacity to assist in correcting the sanitation conditions in rural Alaska as exemplified by its ongoing efforts in other areas of the country such as the American Southwest Colonias where border town communities are receiving assistance in

establishing basic water and sewage facilities; and

WHEREAS a national effort similar to that currently being undertaken in the American Southwest Colonias will enable accelerated transformation for residents in rural Alaska from substandard sanitation conditions.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the President of the United States to direct the administrators of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Indian Health Service to join in a partnership with the State of Alaska to finance and implement a long-term, comprehensive effort to improve sanitation conditions in rural Alaska in cooperation with Native regional nonprofit corporations and Alaska's rural communities; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the President of the United States to ask the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the United States Department of the Interior, the United States Department of Education, the United States Department of Labor, the United States Department of Transportation, the United States Department of Energy, the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States Department of Commerce, the Small Business Administration, the Office of Management and Budget, and ACTION to commit available finances and resources necessary to improve the water and sanitation conditions in rural Alaska by implementing the recommendations of the Alaska Sanitation Task Force.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Bill Clinton, President of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton, First Lady; the Honorable Mike Espy, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the Honorable Ronald Brown, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce; the Honorable Richard W. Riley, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education; the Honorable Hazel R. O'Leary, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy; the Honorable Donna E. Shalala, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; the Honorable Henry G. Cisneros, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; the Honorable Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior; the Honorable Robert B. Reich, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor; the Honorable Frederico Pena, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation; Carol M.

Browner, Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Leon E. Panetta, Director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget; Patricia F. Saiki, Administrator of the Small Business Administration; John Seal, Acting Director of ACTION; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, United States Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, United States Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.