

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 13

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

NINETEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Introduced: 3/13/96

Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 Relating to the rules of the Iditarod Trail Committee concerning the deaths of
2 dogs that occur during the running of the Iditarod Dog Sled Race.

3 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

4 WHEREAS the Iditarod Dog Sled Race has gained national and international attention
5 since its inception and is considered to be a strenuous athletic event for both mushers and their
6 animals; and

7 WHEREAS each year the Iditarod Trail Committee has taken the time to review its
8 policies and rules in an attempt to make the race a better event for all participants, including
9 the dogs that run the race; and

10 WHEREAS, in recent years, the Iditarod Trail Committee has been pressured by
11 animal activists to review the committee's rules to make sure that animals are protected even
12 more than in the past, often beyond reasonable standards of animal care; and

13 WHEREAS the Iditarod Trail Committee adopted Rule 18 at its April 21, 1995,
14 meeting that was endorsed by the International Sled Dog Veterinary Medicine Association
15 (I.S.D.V.M.A.), an association of veterinarians who administer care to the dogs in the Iditarod;
16 and

1 **WHEREAS** some of the mushers were opposed to this rule and voiced their concern
2 at the musher's meeting held before this year's race; and

3 **WHEREAS** an agreement was reached that provided that, if a gross necropsy could
4 determine the cause of death or if the cause of death was determined to be "within the
5 control" of the musher, that musher would be withdrawn from the race; and

6 **WHEREAS** Rick Swenson is well known throughout the dog sledding community for
7 taking excellent care of his dogs; and

8 **WHEREAS** Rick Swenson had an unfortunate death occur with one of his dogs, the
9 cause of which could not be determined; and

10 **WHEREAS** the rules committee, the I.S.D.V.M.A., and the Iditarod Trail Committee
11 Board of Directors implemented Rule 18 and disqualified Rick Swenson from the race stating,
12 "By enacting this rule, we believe that it is better to risk sending an innocent person home for
13 the year rather than do nothing about preventable deaths";

14 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives strongly urges the Iditarod Trail
15 Committee to review Rule 18 and clarify the rule so that, in situations like Rick Swenson's,
16 mushers are not unfairly judged and ruled guilty before being allowed to prove their
17 innocence.