

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 22

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

NINETEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATOR HOFFMAN

Introduced: 4/7/95

Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Requesting research on fisheries and marine mammals in the Bering Sea.**

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

3 **WHEREAS** the Bering Sea is one of the most productive fishing areas in the world;
4 and

5 **WHEREAS** the harvest of fisheries resources in the Bering Sea totaled 4,740,000,000
6 pounds in 1993 and 4,600,000,000 pounds in 1994; and

7 **WHEREAS** the harvest of fisheries resources in the Bering Sea was worth
8 \$843,000,000 to commercial fishermen in 1993 and \$893,000,000 to commercial fishermen
9 in 1994; and

10 **WHEREAS** fish and marine mammals from the Bering Sea are a principal source of
11 subsistence foods for the communities of western Alaska; and

12 **WHEREAS** the abundance of northern sea lions has declined by 70 percent since
13 1959; and

14 **WHEREAS** the productivity of northern fur seals on the Pribilof Islands has declined
15 significantly since 1960; and

16 **WHEREAS** the abundance of shellfish in the Bering Sea has declined precipitously
17 in recent years resulting in a closure of the Bristol Bay red King crab fishery in 1994 and in

1 reduction in the abundance of Tanner crab to less than a third of 1991 population levels; and
2 **WHEREAS** the biomass of pollock in the Aleutian Basin and western Bering Sea has
3 declined substantially in recent years due to overfishing and continues to decline despite a
4 closure of pollock fishing in the "Donut Hole" area since 1992; and

5 **WHEREAS** certain western Alaska chum salmon stocks have declined during the last
6 five years in spite of a five-fold increase in the total abundance of salmon in western Alaska
7 since the early 1970s; and

8 **WHEREAS** the biomass of arrowtooth flounder and other flatfish has increased
9 significantly (up to a ten-fold increase for some species) in the eastern Bering Sea since the
10 early 1970s;

11 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the
12 Congress to provide funding to the appropriate federal agencies and institutions to conduct
13 studies of the Bering Sea ecosystem to discover the causes of and to make recommendations
14 for addressing the dramatic changes occurring in the abundance of fish and marine mammals
15 in the Bering Sea.

16 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Al Gore, Jr., Vice-President
17 of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Newt Gingrich, Speaker
18 of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Bob Dole, Majority Leader of the U.S.
19 Senate; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators,
20 and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in
21 Congress.