

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 38

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY SENATORS WILKEN, Donley, Taylor, Mackie, Phillips, Pete Kelly

REPRESENTATIVE James

Introduced: 2/15/00

Referred: Transportation

A RESOLUTION

1 **Expressing support for a cooperative United States-Canada feasibility study on**
2 **extending the North American rail system through British Columbia and the**
3 **Yukon Territory to Alaska.**

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

5 **WHEREAS** rail transportation is the most cost-effective long distance method of
6 overland transportation; and

7 **WHEREAS** rail transportation is an essential component of the North American inter-
8 modal transportation system; and

9 **WHEREAS** rail transportation is energy efficient, capable of moving goods three to
10 nine times farther per unit of fuel than highway transportation; and

11 **WHEREAS** rail transportation emits lower levels of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide,
12 nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds per ton of freight moved than other modes
13 of freight transportation; and

14 **WHEREAS** rail transportation systems allow controlled access to and reduced overall
15 effects on environmentally sensitive regions; and

16 **WHEREAS** rail transportation remains an important component of national and

1 continental defense planning; and

2 **WHEREAS** the North American rail transportation system will not be complete until
3 it extends to all states, provinces, and territories on the continent; and

4 **WHEREAS** the State of Alaska recently enacted legislation to reauthorize the
5 delineation and acquisition of a rail transportation corridor from the present terminus of the
6 Alaska Railroad to the border between Alaska and the Yukon Territory; and

7 **WHEREAS** Alaska, the Yukon Territory, and British Columbia contain extensive oil
8 and gas, mineral, and timber resource reserves that currently are inaccessible, and bilateral
9 cooperation in the development of a freight transportation infrastructure would facilitate the
10 utilization of these resources for the benefit of the United States and Canada; and

11 **WHEREAS** a northern rail system may significantly benefit the visitor industry by
12 facilitating the comfortable movement of passengers over long distances while minimizing the
13 effect of such movement on the surrounding environment; and

14 **WHEREAS** ongoing research and advancements in rail technology continue to
15 increase the efficiency of rail transportation and ensure rail safety and decrease the effect of
16 rail transportation on the environment;

17 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the
18 government of the United States and the government of Canada to engage in a cooperative
19 feasibility study to examine the costs and benefits of constructing a rail connection to link
20 Alaska and the Yukon Territory by way of northern British Columbia with the existing North
21 American rail transportation system; and be it

22 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the
23 government of the United States and the government of Canada to establish a bilateral
24 commission representing local governments, business interests, and aboriginal stakeholders to
25 define the goals and objectives for the cooperative feasibility study and to report the results
26 of the study to the appropriate governmental entities of the United States and Canada; and be
27 it

28 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that
29 funding for operation of the bilateral commission and for the conduct of the cooperative
30 feasibility study be considered a priority for the governments of the United States, Canada,
31 British Columbia, the Yukon Territory, and the State of Alaska.

1 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Jean Chretien, Prime
2 Minister of Canada; the Honorable David Collenette, Minister of Transport, Transport Canada;
3 the Honorable Dan Miller, Premier of the Province of British Columbia; the Honorable Piers
4 McDonald, Government Leader, Yukon Territory; the Honorable Bill Clinton, President of the
5 United States; the Honorable Madeleine K. Albright, United States Secretary of State; the
6 Honorable Rodney E. Slater, United States Secretary of Transportation; the Honorable Strom
7 Thurmond, President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Jesse Helms, Chair of
8 the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable John McCain, Chair
9 of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the U.S. Senate; the
10 Honorable J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable
11 Benjamin A. Gilman, Chair of the Committee on International Relations of the U.S. House
12 of Representatives; the Honorable Bud Shuster, Chair of the Committee on Transportation and
13 Infrastructure of the U.S. House of Representatives; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the
14 Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S.
15 Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.