

CS FOR HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 12(CRA)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Offered: 4/29/05

Referred: Finance

Sponsor(s): HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A RESOLUTION

1 **Relating to the Joint Rural Assessment Task Force.**

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

3 **WHEREAS** the Constitution of the State of Alaska provides that the Alaska State
4 Legislature shall provide for the performance of services it deems necessary or advisable in
5 unorganized boroughs and that the legislature serves as the assembly for the unorganized
6 borough; and

7 **WHEREAS** the Alaska State Legislature exercises that responsibility by proposing
8 and implementing policies to maintain state infrastructure critical to economic development,
9 to assure the security of the nation by providing essential services to the caretakers of our
10 remote harbors, airports, and fledgling road systems, and to invest in the future economic
11 stability of Alaska; and

12 **WHEREAS**, notwithstanding these commitments and efforts, recent developments in
13 rural communities, including sky-rocketing energy prices and the erosion or elimination of
14 revenue sharing and other forms of assistance to local governments, have compromised the
15 ability of local communities to provide basic local services and have underscored the need for
16 the Alaska State Legislature to conduct a reassessment of the efficacy of its policies; and

1 **WHEREAS**, in the past few years, many local communities in Alaska have either shut
2 down, entered deeply into debt, or ceased providing basic local services as a result of lower
3 local revenue; and

4 **WHEREAS** many communities are unable to realize revenues through property
5 taxation because a high percentage of property within their boundaries is exempt from
6 taxation; and

7 **WHEREAS**, absent state revenues but with increasing costs, many communities have
8 been unable to pay liability insurance costs, leaving the communities and, ultimately, the state
9 at financial risk; and

10 **WHEREAS** the Denali Commission, a state-federal partnership, regularly invests in
11 rural Alaskan communities and has developed a five-year strategic plan to guide its activities;
12 and

13 **WHEREAS** the governor took action to address the serious challenges posed by high
14 energy costs in rural Alaska by appointing the Rural Energy Action Council to recommend
15 short-term and long-term approaches to address the costs; and

16 **WHEREAS** the Rural Energy Action Council has recently released its report and has
17 recommended a series of actions which, taken together, could provide partial relief to the
18 communities; and

19 **WHEREAS** crafting additional measures that will efficaciously address both short-
20 term and long-term sustainability issues will be dependent upon conducting an appropriate
21 needs assessment to guide these efforts; and

22 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Municipal League and the First Alaskans Institute have
23 committed to undertake such an assessment by examining conditions in a representative
24 sampling of rural communities;

25 **BE IT RESOLVED** that, pursuant to the authority granted under art. II, sec. 11,
26 Constitution of the State of Alaska to establish interim committees, the Joint Rural
27 Assessment Task Force is established; and be it

28 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Joint Rural Assessment Task Force shall consist of
29 nine members, three senators appointed by the president of the senate, three representatives
30 appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives, a public member appointed by the
31 speaker of the house of representatives, a designee from the First Alaskans Institute, and a

1 designee from the Alaska Municipal League; and be it

2 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the public member, designee from the First Alaskans
3 Institute, and designee from the Alaska Municipal League will not receive compensation, per
4 diem, or reimbursement for travel or other expenses incurred in serving on the Joint Rural
5 Assessment Task Force; and be it

6 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the House and Senate Community and Regional
7 Affairs Committees shall assign committee staff to provide support services for the Joint
8 Rural Assessment Task Force; and be it

9 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Joint Rural Assessment Task Force shall consider
10 the findings and recommendations resulting from the needs assessment prepared by the
11 Alaska Municipal League and the First Alaskans Institute, the Denali Commission's Five-
12 Year Strategic Plan, and the Rural Energy Action Council's Finding and Action
13 Recommendations, travel to communities to hold hearings on the issues, and deliver a report
14 of its finding to the legislature by January 15, 2006, together with appropriate legislative
15 proposals for consideration during the Second Regular Session of the Twenty-Fourth Alaska
16 Legislature; and be it

17 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Joint Rural Assessment Task Force may meet
18 during and between legislative sessions and that the task force is terminated on February 1,
19 2006.