

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 16

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVE ELKINS

Introduced: 3/14/05
Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Opposing the designation of any area in the state as a world heritage site, biosphere**
2 **reserve, or any other type of international designation without the consent of the Alaska**
3 **State Legislature.**

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

5 **WHEREAS** the United Nations has designated over 60 sites in the United States as
6 "world heritage sites" or "biosphere reserves," which altogether are equal in size to the State
7 of Colorado, the eighth largest state; and

8 **WHEREAS** art. IV, sec. 3, United States Constitution, provides that the United States
9 Congress shall make all needed rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property
10 belonging to the United States and nothing in the constitution shall be construed to prejudice
11 any claims of the United States or of any state; and

12 **WHEREAS** many of the United Nations' designations include private property
13 inholdings and contemplate buffer zones of adjacent land; and

14 **WHEREAS** some international land designations, such as those under the United
15 States Biosphere Reserve Program and the Man and Biosphere Program of the United Nations

1 Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, operate under independent national
2 committees such as the United States Man and Biosphere National Committee that have no
3 legislative directives or authorization from the United States Congress; and

4 **WHEREAS** local citizens and public officials concerned about job creation and
5 resource-based economies usually have no say in the designation of land near their homes for
6 inclusion in an international land use program; and

7 **WHEREAS** these international designations are an open invitation to the international
8 community to interfere in domestic economies and land use decisions; and

9 **WHEREAS** environmental groups and the United States Department of the Interior,
10 National Park Service, have been working to establish an international park, a world heritage
11 site, and a marine biosphere reserve called Beringia covering parts of western Alaska, eastern
12 Russia, and the Bering Sea; and

13 **WHEREAS** foreign companies and countries could use these international
14 designations in western Alaska to block economic development that they perceive as
15 competition; and

16 **WHEREAS** animal right activists could use these international designations to
17 generate pressure to harass or block harvesting of marine mammals by Alaska Natives; and

18 **WHEREAS** these international designations could be used to harass or block
19 commercial activity, including pipelines, railroads, and power transmission lines; and

20 **WHEREAS** the United States Department of the Interior, in cooperation with the
21 Federal Interagency Panel for World Heritage, has identified the Aleutian Island Unit of the
22 Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Cape
23 Krusenstern National Monument, Denali National Park, Gates of the Arctic National Park,
24 and Katmai National Park as likely to meet the criteria for future nomination as world heritage
25 sites; and

26 **WHEREAS**, under current law, the United States Secretary of the Interior can
27 nominate world heritage sites, and the United States Secretary of State can nominate
28 biosphere reserves, both without approval by the Congress;

29 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature recognizes and reaffirms the
30 constitutional authority of the Congress as the elected representatives of the people over the
31 federally owned land of the United States; and be it

1 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature objects to the nomination
2 or designation of any site in Alaska as a world heritage site, biosphere reserve, or any other
3 type of international designation without the prior consent of the Alaska State Legislature; and
4 be it

5 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States
6 Congress to pass and the President to sign legislation that will require approval by an Act of
7 Congress before any area in the United States or its territories can be nominated as a world
8 heritage site, biosphere reserve, or any other type of international designation.

9 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable George W. Bush, President
10 of the United States; the Honorable Richard B. Cheney, Vice-President of the United States
11 and President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Gale Norton, United States Secretary of the
12 Interior; the Honorable Condoleezza Rice, United States Secretary of State; the Honorable J.
13 Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Bill Frist,
14 Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Harry Reid, Minority Leader of the U.S.
15 Senate; the Honorable Tom DeLay, Majority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives;
16 the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives; the
17 Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable
18 Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and, by
19 electronic transmission, all other members of the 109th United States Congress.