

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 17

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Introduced: 3/29/10

Referred: Community and Regional Affairs, Finance

A RESOLUTION

1 **Establishing and relating to the Alaska Northern Waters Task Force.**

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

3 **WHEREAS** Alaska is the only Arctic state in the nation; and

4 **WHEREAS** recent warming trends have resulted in the depletion of Arctic perennial
5 sea ice by nine percent a decade; and

6 **WHEREAS**, according to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the
7 rate of depletion is accelerating because of interaction among the ice, oceans, and atmosphere;
8 and

9 **WHEREAS** rapidly retreating sea ice is altering fish and wildlife habitats and
10 affecting the accessibility and viability of certain species, on which many local communities
11 rely for nutritional and cultural purposes; and

12 **WHEREAS** reduced sea ice is affecting polar route navigation by opening oceans
13 previously frozen year-round; and

14 **WHEREAS** the new accessibility of the Northern waters is resulting in increased
15 marine transportation, access to resources, tourism, fisheries, and the presence of United
16 States government agencies in the North; and

1 **WHEREAS** the waters of Northern Alaska are of national security and strategic
2 importance to the United States and the State of Alaska; and

3 **WHEREAS**, because of national security concerns, the United States Coast Guard is
4 increasing its presence in the North and has plans to build new infrastructure to support its
5 heightened activity, including housing and office facilities and possibly a deep water port; and

6 **WHEREAS** Northern Alaska contains important mineral and other resources both in
7 state waters and on the outer continental shelf; and

8 **WHEREAS** commercial activities, including resource development, and the revenue
9 they generate for the state may be significantly affected by the changing Arctic waters; and

10 **WHEREAS** those changes will affect local communities, businesses, the state, and
11 the natural resources on which they rely; and

12 **WHEREAS** there is no comprehensive state plan for Alaska's Northern waters; and

13 **WHEREAS** various federal agencies and international bodies are working together to
14 form a commission to address the changing ocean patterns and the opportunities and problems
15 that may arise as a result of those changing patterns; and

16 **WHEREAS** the State of Alaska should be involved in the process of forming the
17 commission; and

18 **WHEREAS** a comprehensive plan to address the warming ocean, including the
19 economic, ecological, and security effects, will benefit the state and its residents;

20 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Alaska State Legislature that the Alaska Northern Waters
21 Task Force is created in the legislative branch and shall consist of nine members as follows:

22 (1) one senator from Northwest Alaska appointed by the President of the
23 Senate;

24 (2) two representatives from Northwest Alaska appointed by the Speaker of
25 the House of Representatives; and

26 (3) six members appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the
27 Speaker of the House of Representatives, as follows:

28 (A) one member representing the United States Coast Guard;

29 (B) one member representing the executive branch of state
30 government;

31 (C) the mayors of the North Slope Borough, Northwest Arctic

1 Borough, and City of Nome; and

2 (D) one member representing the United States Department of the
3 Interior; and be it

4 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the legislators on the task force shall select a chair
5 from among themselves and the chair may assign staff to provide support to the task force;
6 and be it

7 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the municipal government and federal government
8 members of the task force may receive per diem and travel expenses authorized for boards
9 and commissions under AS 39.20.180 if they do not receive reimbursement for expenses from
10 the municipal or federal government; and be it

11 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force may meet during and between legislative
12 sessions and the duties of the task force include the following:

13 (1) assess and facilitate creation of a state and federal commission responsible
14 for overseeing the development of state and federal northern ocean waters;

15 (2) facilitate regional coordination, cooperation, and outreach regarding the
16 creation of the commission to keep local stakeholders informed and to incorporate their input
17 into the process;

18 (3) identify and coordinate efforts of mutual concern for federal, state, and
19 local agencies, as well as international interests in the creation of the commission; and

20 (4) conduct hearings in the Northern region of the state to fulfill its purpose;
21 and be it

22 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force shall provide recommendations
23 regarding the formation of the commission and shall deliver a preliminary report of its
24 findings to the legislature by January 20, 2012, and deliver a final report to the legislature on
25 January 30, 2012, together with legislative proposals for consideration; and be it

26 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force shall be available for legislative hearings
27 regarding its final report and recommendations; and be it

28 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the continuation or termination of the task force shall
29 be reevaluated during the Second Regular Session of the Twenty-Seventh Alaska State
30 Legislature.