

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 23

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

**BY THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE BY REQUEST OF THE ALASKA NORTHERN WATERS
TASK FORCE**

Introduced: 2/3/12

Referred: Resources, Finance

A RESOLUTION

1 **Establishing and relating to the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission.**

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

3 **WHEREAS** the Arctic is warming at twice the global rate, resulting in the loss of
4 perennial sea ice and changes to the terrestrial environment; and

5 **WHEREAS** scientists recently predicted that, in 30 to 40 years, there will no longer
6 be summer sea ice in the Arctic; and

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

9 **WHEREAS** the loss of sea ice will bring new opportunities for mineral extraction, oil
10 and gas development, fisheries, tourism, and marine shipping; and

11 **WHEREAS** the Arctic might contain one-quarter of the world's untapped petroleum
12 reserves; and

13 **WHEREAS** Norway, Canada, Russia, and Denmark are making or preparing to make
14 claims to the Arctic seafloor under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and
15 are increasing their scientific research on and offshore exploration for minerals and oil and
16 gas; and

1 **WHEREAS** Canada and Russia are increasing their military presence in the Arctic
 2 and are planning to build infrastructure to support that increased military presence; and

3 **WHEREAS** both Arctic and non-Arctic countries are increasing their presence in the
 4 Arctic and are building or planning to build additional infrastructure, including ports, safe
 5 harbors, search and rescue centers, and icebreakers and other Arctic-capable vessels; and

6 **WHEREAS** the waters of Northern Alaska are of national security and strategic
 7 importance to the United States and the state; and

8 **WHEREAS**, because of national security concerns, the United States Coast Guard is
 9 increasing its presence in the North and has plans to build new infrastructure to support its
 10 heightened activity, including housing and office facilities and possibly including a deepwater
 11 port; and

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

14 **WHEREAS** local communities, businesses, the state, and the natural resources that
 15 local communities, businesses, and the state rely on will be affected by commercial activities
 16 and resource development in the Arctic; and

17 **WHEREAS** climate changes in the Arctic affect the habitat, accessibility, and
 18 viability of fish and wildlife species that local communities rely on for nutritional and cultural
 19 purposes; and

20 **WHEREAS** Norway, Canada, Russia, Denmark, and other countries have formal
 21 Arctic policies on or strategies for future development in the Arctic; and

22 **WHEREAS** the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut have developed a shared
 23 northern vision to guide development in the Canadian Arctic; and

24 **WHEREAS** this state is the only Arctic state in the United States; and

25 **WHEREAS** the state does not have a comprehensive plan for the northern waters of
 26 Alaska; and

27 **WHEREAS** the state does not have a comprehensive Arctic policy; and

28 **WHEREAS** a comprehensive policy to address the Arctic areas of the state, including
 29 the economic, ecological, and security effects, will benefit the state and its residents;

30 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Alaska State Legislature that the Alaska Arctic Policy
 31 Commission is created in the legislative branch and shall consist of 16 members as follows:

(1) three senators appointed by the President of the Senate, one member being from the minority;

(2) three representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one member being from the minority; and

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

(A) one member representing the federal government;

(B) one member representing a tribal entity;

(C) one member representing the mining industry;

(D) one member representing the oil and gas industry;

(E) one member representing the University of Alaska, who has a background in Arctic science;

(F) one member representing fisheries;

(G) one member from a local government or an association of a local government;

(H) one member from a coastal community;

(I) one member representing an international Arctic organization;

(4) one member representing the executive branch of state government, appointed by the Governor; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that a vacancy on the commission shall be filled in the manner of the original appointment; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the representatives on the commission shall select one cochair from the representative members, and the senators on the commission shall select one cochair from the senator members; and the cochairs may assign staff to provide support to the commission; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the public members and, if the member representing the federal government does not receive reimbursement for expenses from the federal government, the federal government member of the commission may receive per diem and travel expenses authorized for boards and commissions under AS 39.20.180; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission may meet during and between legislative sessions, and the duties of the commission include the following:

1 (1) conduct hearings and take public testimony throughout the state to fulfill
2 the purpose of the commission;

3 (2) develop an Arctic policy for the state and produce a strategy for the
4 implementation of an Arctic policy; and be it

5 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the commission shall provide recommendations
6 regarding Arctic policy and shall deliver a preliminary report of its findings to the legislature
7 by January 30, 2014, and deliver a final report to the legislature on January 30, 2015, together
8 with legislative proposals for consideration; and be it

9 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the commission shall be available for legislative
10 hearings regarding its final report and recommendations; and be it

11 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the continuation or termination of the commission
12 shall be reevaluated during the First Regular Session of the Twenty-Ninth Alaska State
13 Legislature.