

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRADE, AND TOURISM

Introduced: 3/7/11

Referred: House Special Committee on Economic Development, Trade, and Tourism, Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the United States Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of**
2 **the Sea.**

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

4 **WHEREAS** the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea preserves freedom
5 of navigation as a basic right of all countries; and

6 **WHEREAS** the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea permits member
7 nations to claim an exclusive economic zone out to 200 nautical miles from shore, with an
8 exclusive sovereign right to explore, manage, and develop all living and nonliving resources,
9 including deep sea mining, within that exclusive economic zone; and

10 **WHEREAS** the United States Arctic Research Commission estimates that the United
11 Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea would permit the United States to lay claim
12 beyond the present 200-mile exclusive economic zone to an area of the Arctic Ocean seabed
13 north of Alaska that is about the size of California; and

14 **WHEREAS**, by not joining the Convention, the United States is forfeiting sovereign
15 rights to and international recognition of an expansion of United States resource jurisdiction
16 by as much as 1,000,000 square kilometers of ocean, an area half the size of the Louisiana

1 Purchase; and

2 **WHEREAS**, with nearly one-third of all the world's hydrocarbons being produced
3 off-shore, the United States would be unwise to ignore the need for access to extended oil and
4 gas resources on the outer continental shelf; and

5 **WHEREAS** the United States Geological Survey estimates that the Arctic contains
6 conventional oil and gas resources totaling approximately 90,000,000,000 barrels of oil, 1,669
7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 44,000,000,000 barrels of natural gas liquids, amounting
8 to more than one-fifth of the world's undiscovered, recoverable oil and natural gas resources;
9 and

10 **WHEREAS** American energy and deep-seabed companies are at a disadvantage in
11 making investments in the outer continental shelf because of the legal uncertainty over the
12 outer limit of the federal continental shelf; and

13 **WHEREAS** the United States, as a major maritime power and as the country with the
14 largest exclusive economic zone and one of the largest continental shelves, stands to gain
15 more from the Convention in terms of economic and resource rights than any other country;
16 and

17 **WHEREAS**, other Arctic nations have been asserting their sovereignty in the Arctic
18 and making extended continental shelf claims under the United Nations Convention on the
19 Law of the Sea; and

20 **WHEREAS** the United States, with 1,000 miles of Arctic coast off of the State of
21 Alaska, remains the only Arctic nation that has not ratified the United Nations Convention on
22 the Law of the Sea; and

23 **WHEREAS**, until the United States ratifies the United Nations Convention on the
24 Law of the Sea, the United States will not become a full partner in cooperative efforts of
25 Arctic nations to address the manifold problems of the region; and

26 **WHEREAS**, until the United States ratifies the United Nations Convention on the
27 Law of the Sea, the United States cannot participate in deliberations to amend provisions of
28 the Convention that relate to the

29 (1) oil, gas, and mineral resources in the Arctic Ocean and other northern
30 waters;

31 (2) conduct of essential scientific research in the world's oceans;

- 1 (3) right of the United States to the use of the seas;
2 (4) rules of navigation;
3 (5) effect of the use of the seas on world economic development; and
4 (6) environmental concerns related to the use of the seas; and

5 **WHEREAS** the United States continues to suffer a diplomatic blight on its reputation
6 for rejecting a carefully negotiated accord that enjoys overwhelming international consensus,
7 one that has been adjusted specifically to meet the demands set out by President Ronald
8 Reagan two decades ago; and

9 **WHEREAS** the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea will have sizable
10 beneficial effects on virtually all states, both coastal and noncoastal, because the United States
11 is heavily dependent on the use, development, and conservation of the world's oceans and
12 their resources; and

13 **WHEREAS** ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea has
14 been pending before the United States Senate since 1994, and hearings on the treaty were held
15 by the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in 1994, 2003, and 2004, and on
16 September 27, 2007, and October 4, 2007; and

17 **WHEREAS**, despite favorable reports by the United States Senate Committee on
18 Foreign Relations regarding the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2004
19 and 2007, the United States Senate has yet to vote on the ratification of the Convention; and

20 **WHEREAS** all six of the United States military leaders making up the Joint Chiefs of
21 Staff support Senate ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; and

22 **WHEREAS** ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea has
23 wide bipartisan support; and

24 **WHEREAS**, in 2009, the Twenty-Sixth Alaska State Legislature passed a similar
25 resolution to this one;

26 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature again strongly urges the United
27 States Senate in emphatic terms to please ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of
28 the Sea as soon as possible.

29 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Vice-
30 President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable John F. Kerry,
31 Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; the Honorable Richard G. Lugar,

1 ranking Republican on the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; the Honorable Lisa
2 Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, members of the Alaska
3 delegation in Congress; and all other members of the United States Senate.