

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 2
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATOR STEDMAN

Introduced: 3/28/13
Referred: Judiciary

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the governor to acquire land in the Tongass National Forest from the United**
2 **States government by purchase or negotiation or by seeking amendment to the Alaska**
3 **Statehood Act.**

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

5 **WHEREAS** the Tongass National Forest was created in 1907 by a proclamation of
6 President Theodore Roosevelt; and

7 **WHEREAS**, under the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339), the federal
8 government provided Alaska with a 103,350,000-acre land entitlement, which was considered
9 to be sufficient for the newly formed state to become economically self-supporting; and

10 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339) gave the state 25
11 years to select land for entitlement; and

12 **WHEREAS** the 25-year period established in the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508,
13 72 Stat. 339) as the period in which the state may select land for entitlement was later
14 extended, in effect, by various legislation, with the result that approximately 5,500,000 acres
15 of the land entitlement granted to the state by the Act remain available to the state for

1 selection; and

2 **WHEREAS**, from the 1950s through the early 1990s, the commercial harvest of
3 timber formed a major part of the economy of Southeast Alaska; and

4 **WHEREAS** the commercial harvest of timber no longer forms a major part of the
5 economy of Southeast Alaska because the timber industry does not have access to an adequate
6 amount of timber that can be economically harvested from the Tongass National Forest; and

7 **WHEREAS**, in the past four years, several efforts to revitalize the timber industry in
8 Southeast Alaska have failed because a timber industry cannot exist without an adequate
9 timber supply; and

10 **WHEREAS** the United States Congress has placed 40 percent of the Tongass
11 National Forest off limits for commercial use, and the United States Forest Service has
12 administratively set aside an additional 58 percent of the Tongass National Forest; and

13 **WHEREAS**, at the present time, only two percent of the Tongass National Forest is
14 managed for the purpose of providing local communities with the opportunity to harvest
15 timber; and

16 **WHEREAS** 91 percent of the old growth timber standing in the Tongass National
17 Forest in 1954 remains standing, and the remaining nine percent that has been harvested has
18 now been replaced with young growth timber that will begin maturing in about 30 years; and

19 **WHEREAS** findings prepared by the Alaska Timber Jobs Task Force in June 2012
20 reveal that the timber industry is vitally important to statewide and regional economies in the
21 state; and

22 **WHEREAS** the principal barrier to job creation in the Southeast Alaska timber
23 industry is the lack of a sufficient amount of timber that can be economically harvested from
24 the Tongass National Forest; and

25 **WHEREAS** an unrealistic Tongass Land Management Plan dictated by Washington,
26 D.C., endless environmental legal appeals, and a lack of political will by public officials who
27 are in a position to support meeting timber harvest targets have prevented the United States
28 Forest Service from providing the timber industry access to enough economically harvestable
29 timber in the Tongass National Forest to make the timber industry commercially viable in
30 Southeast Alaska; and

31 **WHEREAS**, because the United States Forest Service has not been able to provide

1 the timber industry with access to enough economically harvestable timber in the Tongass
 2 National Forest to sustain the timber industry in Southeast Alaska, it is time for the governor
 3 to take the initiative and to select, under the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339),
 4 land in the Tongass National Forest that will provide enough economically harvestable timber
 5 to create a sustainable economic base for the communities of Southeast Alaska; and

6 **WHEREAS** sec. 6 of the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339) limited the
 7 state's selection of land from the Tongass National Forest and the Chugach National Forest to
 8 400,000 acres and limited the use of that acreage to recreation and community expansion,
 9 with the intention of preserving timber for federal long-term sales; and

10 **WHEREAS** sec. 6 of the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339) allowed
 11 the state to select land in other regions of the state without restricting the use of the land to
 12 recreation and community expansion, and, because the timber industry in Southeast Alaska
 13 has become unsustainable, the state should be entitled to select some of its remaining land
 14 entitlement under the Alaska Statehood Act from the Tongass National Forest, without being
 15 limited to using that land for recreation and community expansion;

16 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully urges the governor
 17 to either negotiate state land entitlements under sec. 6 of the Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-
 18 508, 72 Stat. 339) or work to amend the Alaska Statehood Act for the purpose of acquiring
 19 forested land in the Tongass National Forest; and be it

20 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that, if the state fails to acquire forested land in the Tongass
 21 National Forest either by negotiating state land entitlements under the Alaska Statehood Act
 22 (P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339) or by amending the Alaska Statehood Act, the Alaska State
 23 Legislature urges the governor to negotiate the purchase of forested land in the Tongass
 24 National Forest from the federal government.

25 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of
 26 the United States; the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Vice-President of the United States and
 27 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Ken Salazar, United States Secretary of the
 28 Interior; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators,
 29 and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in
 30 Congress; and the Honorable Sean Parnell, Governor of Alaska.