

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 11

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATOR GIESSEL

Introduced: 2/2/15

Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the President of the United States and the United States Congress to acquire the**
2 **area commonly known as Central Park on Manhattan in New York City on behalf of the**
3 **federal government; urging the United States Congress to declare Central Park to be a**
4 **wilderness area and to prohibit any further improvement or development of Central**
5 **Park unless authorized by an Act of Congress.**

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

7 **WHEREAS**, before Henry Hudson's landing on September 12, 1609, Manhattan was
8 a remarkably diverse and natural landscape of hills, valleys, forests, fields, freshwater
9 wetlands, salt marshes, beaches, springs, ponds, and streams and supported a rich and
10 abundant community of wildlife, and sustained people for thousands of years; and

11 **WHEREAS**, since the arrival of Henry Hudson, the unrestrained development of
12 buildings, highways, and urban sprawl on Manhattan has destroyed habitat, displaced
13 indigenous peoples, and disrupted what had been the delicate Muir Web; and

14 **WHEREAS** at least 1,000 species of plants and vertebrates, including 24 species of
15 mammals, 233 species of birds, 32 species of reptiles and amphibians, 85 species of fish, and

1 627 species of plants, and an unknown number of species of fungi, lichens, mosses, insects,
2 shellfish, and other invertebrates previously inhabited Manhattan; and

3 **WHEREAS** resident mammals previously included the gray wolf, gray fox, beaver,
4 white-tailed deer, elk, short-beaked common dolphin, long-finned pilot whale, bobcat,
5 mountain lion, cottontail rabbit, white-footed mouse, river otter, black bear, and red bat; and

6 **WHEREAS** resident bird species previously included the bald eagle, belted
7 kingfisher, wood duck, green heron, cedar waxwing, passenger pigeon, American goldfinch,
8 Baltimore oriole, peregrine falcon, wild turkey, and red-bellied woodpecker; and

9 **WHEREAS** resident plants previously included the sugar maple, mountain holly, wild
10 sarsaparilla, American ginseng, purple milkweed, yellow birch, wild cucumber, white oak, red
11 hickory, white ash, red pine, black spruce, mountain ash, and eastern cottonwood; and

12 **WHEREAS** resident reptiles previously included the loggerhead sea turtle, brown
13 snake, timber rattlesnake, eastern mud turtle, diamondback terrapin, and redbelly snake; and

14 **WHEREAS**, in 1609, Manhattan's biodiversity density for each acre rivaled that of
15 national parks such as Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Great Smoky Mountains; and

16 **WHEREAS** Manhattan once had more than 570 hills, 60 miles of streams, 20 ponds,
17 and 300 springs; and

18 **WHEREAS** sandy beaches once reached from the tip of Manhattan to a point past
19 42nd Street on the Hudson River shore; beyond the shore was the vibrant, dynamic tidal
20 estuary with complex currents, sedimentary patterns, and the influence of the Hudson River;
21 and

22 **WHEREAS** Manhattan's Upper West Side and Tribeca were once a coastal oak-pine
23 forest with red maple swamps; and

24 **WHEREAS** Manhattan once had 55 different ecological communities, including
25 terrestrial communities, wetlands, pond and stream communities, and estuarine communities;
26 and

27 **WHEREAS** the Lenape and their ancestors lived in this area for thousands of years
28 before European contact, obtaining all the food, water, and materials they needed from the
29 local forests, wetlands, and waters; and

30 **WHEREAS**, in Northeastern Algonquin culture, the Lenape were considered the
31 "Ancient Ones," and their folklore suggests a close connection to the land and appreciation of

1 their role as a member of the ecosystem that was shared with the plentiful other species; and

2 **WHEREAS** Manhattan has an area of approximately 22.7 square miles, and Central
3 Park has an area of approximately 1.3 square miles; and

4 **WHEREAS** the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has an area of approximately 29,687
5 square miles and 1002 Area, the area for development in the refuge, has an area of
6 approximately 2,344 square miles; and

7 **WHEREAS** Central Park makes up approximately six percent of Manhattan; and

8 **WHEREAS** the proposed sites for development within 1002 Area make up
9 approximately one-eighth of one percent of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; and

10 **WHEREAS** 16 U.S.C. 3143 requires an authorization by an Act of Congress before
11 leasing or other development leading to the production of oil and gas in the Arctic National
12 Wildlife Refuge may proceed;

13 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the President of the
14 United States and the United States Congress to acquire the area commonly known as Central
15 Park on behalf of the federal government; and be it

16 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States
17 Congress to declare Central Park to be a wilderness area; and be it

18 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States
19 Congress to enact a provision similar to 16 U.S.C. 3143 to prohibit any further improvement
20 or development of Central Park unless authorized by an Act of Congress.

21 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of
22 the United States; the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Vice-President of the United States and
23 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Sally Jewell, United States Secretary of the
24 Interior; the Honorable John Boehner, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; the
25 Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives; the
26 Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Harry Reid,
27 Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair of the U.S. Senate
28 Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senator,
29 and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in
30 Congress.