

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

April 17, 2016

1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair
Senator Mia Costello, Vice Chair
Senator John Coghill
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Bill Stoltze
Senator Bill Wielechowski

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Peter Micciche

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 28(FSH)
Opposing the United States Food and Drug Administration's approval of AquaBounty AquAdvantage genetically engineered salmon; urging the United States Congress to enact legislation that requires prominently labeling genetically engineered products with the words "Genetically Modified" on the product's packaging; and supporting the efforts of the state's congressional delegation to delay the confirmation of the new commissioner of the United States Food and Drug Administration until the United States Food and Drug Administration agrees to require labeling for genetically engineered salmon.

- MOVED SCS CSHJR 28(RES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HJR 28

SHORT TITLE: OPPOSING GM SALMON

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) TARR

01/19/16	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/16	(H)	FSH, L&C
02/04/16	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM CAPITOL 120
02/04/16	(H)	Moved CSHJR 28(FSH) Out of Committee
02/04/16	(H)	MINUTE(FSH)
02/05/16	(H)	FSH RPT CS(FSH) NT 4DP

02/05/16 (H) DP: HERRON, KREISS-TOMKINS, ORTIZ,
STUTES
04/13/16 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
04/13/16 (H) Moved CSHJR 28(FSH) Out of Committee
04/13/16 (H) MINUTE(L&C)
04/14/16 (H) L&C RPT CS(FSH) NT 3DP 1NR
04/14/16 (H) DP: JOSEPHSON, KITO, OLSON
04/14/16 (H) NR: TILTON
04/15/16 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
04/15/16 (H) VERSION: CSHJR 28(FSH)
04/16/16 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/16/16 (S) RES
04/17/16 (S) RES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HJR 28.

THATCHER BROWER, Staff to Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Offered to answer questions on HJR 28.

DANIEL GEORGE, Staff to Senator Bill Stoltze
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained Conceptual Amendment 1 to CSHJR 28(FSH) for the sponsor.

ACTION NARRATIVE

1:30:33 PM

CHAIR CATHY GIESSEL called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stedman, Costello, Coghill, and Chair Giessel.

HJR 28-OPPOSING GM SALMON

1:30:52 PM

CHAIR GIESSEL announced consideration of CSHJR 28(FSH). [version 29-LS1213\H was before the committee.]

1:31:31 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HJR 28, presented the resolution.

THATCHER BROWER, Staff to Representative Geran Tarr, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, introduced himself.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR said everyone is familiar with the issue of genetically modified salmon. The first piece of legislation passed in 2005 required labelling at the state level. This has been a universally opposed proposal by Alaskans. In 2013, prior to approval, the legislature joined the congressional delegation in speaking up against it. Unfortunately, on November 19, 2015, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) approved genetically modified salmon. Since then the congressional delegation has been leading the charge in fighting it and asking for additional requirements, particularly related to labelling. More recently lawsuits were filed in Canada and in the United States; so this is not a done deal.

She said the potential impacts to Alaska's economy are concerning. The commercial fishing industry is the largest private sector employer bringing in more than \$6 billion annually. Also, wild Alaska salmon are integral to our Alaskan way of life. Hopefully, this resolution gives our delegation a little fuel to add to the fire so the delegation can say their state stands strongly behind them.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR noted many supporting letters and documents from major fishing groups and retailers that are concerned about this issue.

[1:33:31 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI joined the committee.

[1:33:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR also noted that approval was done under the 1938 Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act as a veterinary drug. The U.S. lawsuit challenges the FDA saying their authority was really meant for testing drugs used in livestock to resist and prevent disease not to approve genetically modified animals for human consumption. This is the first time they have ever approved a genetically modified animal for human consumption.

[1:34:51 PM](#)

SENATOR STOLTZE joined the committee

[1:35:16 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL noted a correction saying they are hearing HJR 28 not HJR 29 as she stated at the beginning of the meeting. Finding no further questions, she opened public testimony, and finding none, closed it.

SENATOR STOLTZE said that the FDA-related Food Safety Modernization Act has been a difficult issue for smaller Alaska farmers. Alaska is classified as Tier 5 by volume of farms, which throws it in the same category as Rhode Island and some of the other small states.

In speaking to the farmers, including the new director of the Division of Agriculture, Senator Stoltze said they are asking the federal government to put Alaska into Tier 4, because of its logistical challenges and non-connectivity. He asked Representative Tarr if she felt that was consistent with this FDA issue, if he were to offer an amendment.

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REPRESENTATIVE TARR agreed if they think broadly about food security issues in Alaska that it would fit well with this as a communication to the federal government, and specifically to the people at the FDA.

[1:36:46 PM](#)

SENATOR STOLTZE moved Conceptual Amendment 1.

CHAIR GIESSEL objected for purposes of discussion.

SENATOR STOLTZE said his staff, Daniel George, had worked with the Division of Agriculture, and the discussion would be more complete with him.

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DANIEL GEORGE, staff to Senator Bill Stoltze, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said the conceptual amendment does three things. First, it puts the "WHEREAS" on page 3, line 3, relating to the delay of the confirmation of the FDA commissioner in the past tense. That commissioner was confirmed by the Senate 89 to 4 on February 24. So, it just deletes the word "has".

Second, the amendment adds two WHEREAS's and a FURTHER RESOLVED on page 3, following lines 5 and 8. It talks about how Alaska is classified as Tier 5 for purposes of appropriation and compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act. They talked with the director of the Division of Agriculture about the

concern that Alaska is not a state where one can simply go from one end to the other in one day and it also has fiscal challenges. The division asked them to do all they could to assist in making this change.

Finally, Mr. George pointed out that on page 3, line 20, the FDA no longer has an acting commissioner as he is now confirmed, and this corrects that.

CHAIR GIESSEL removed her objection and asked for further discussion.

SENATOR COSTELLO asked if this results in Alaska getting additional federal funding.

[1:39:22 PM](#)

SENATOR STOLTZE replied that it could potentially get more funding, and going to Tier 4 recognizes the compliance difficulties as well. It puts Alaska into a category where optimally there would be more than just money for the inspections but at a higher threshold of understanding. He said there is also a new Speaker of the House and Secretary of the U.S. Senate that might need to be corrected as well.

CHAIR GIESSEL finding no further objection, announced that Amendment 1 was adopted.

[1:40:39 PM](#)

SENATOR STOLTZE moved HJR 28, as amended, from committee with individual recommendations and zero fiscal note(s). There were no objections and SCS CSHJR 28(RES) moved from committee.

CHAIR GIESSEL thanked Representative Tarr for the resolution.

[1:41:21 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL adjourned the Senate Resources Committee meeting at 1:41 p.m.