

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 6

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES EDGMON, Pruitt, Rauscher, Johnson, Millett, LeDoux, Grenn

Introduced: 1/18/17

Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Expressing the Alaska State Legislature's support and appreciation for legislation**
2 **introduced by the state's congressional delegation that would allow for the construction**
3 **of a single-lane gravel road through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, connecting**
4 **the community of King Cove with the Cold Bay Airport; and urging the United States**
5 **Congress to pass the legislation.**

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

7 **WHEREAS** the short gravel airstrip at King Cove is unusable for 100 days a year, on
8 average, because of the high winds and poor visibility typical of the severe storms that are
9 commonplace in the region; and

10 **WHEREAS** the Cold Bay Airport is located less than 30 miles from King Cove and
11 boasts the third largest runway in the state and also includes a cross-wind runway and an
12 instrument approach system for foul weather; and

13 **WHEREAS**, if a person in King Cove suffers a serious medical emergency, the
14 limited medical facilities in the community and in Cold Bay require that the person be flown
15 to Anchorage, which is more than 600 miles away; and

1 **WHEREAS**, over the past three decades, several small planes have crashed, 11
2 individuals have perished during flights into or out of King Cove, and eight lives have been
3 lost because of weather hindering the transportation of sick or injured King Cove residents to
4 medical facilities in Anchorage in a timely manner; and

5 **WHEREAS** the weather conditions that frequently make flying perilous or impossible
6 often render medical evacuations by boat between King Cove and Cold Bay perilous or
7 impossible as well; and

8 **WHEREAS**, even in fair weather, medical evacuations by boat expend precious
9 amounts of time and are complicated by inadequate docking facilities at Cold Bay that
10 sometimes require patients to be hoisted more than 20 feet from a boat's deck to the dock; and

11 **WHEREAS**, for more than 30 years, community members and tribal leaders of King
12 Cove have campaigned for a safe and reliable road crossing the Izembek National Wildlife
13 Refuge to the all-weather Cold Bay Airport; and

14 **WHEREAS** Senator Lisa Murkowski included a provision in the Omnibus Public
15 Lands Management Act of 2009 that allowed for the exchange of federal and nonfederal land
16 in the state for the construction of a road between King Cove and Cold Bay; and

17 **WHEREAS**, in 2010, the Alaska State Legislature concurred with this provision in
18 the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 by unanimously approving the proposed
19 land exchange and road construction; and

20 **WHEREAS**, even though the 12.5 miles of single-lane gravel road to cross the
21 Izembek National Wildlife Refuge would require only a 206-acre corridor representing just
22 0.06 percent of the 315,000-acre refuge, former Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell,
23 announced on December 23, 2015, that she refused to make a determination that the road is in
24 the public interest; and

25 **WHEREAS**, since the former secretary's announcement, 55 additional emergency
26 medical evacuations, 17 of which had to be performed by the United States Coast Guard, have
27 occurred between King Cove and Cold Bay, further demonstrating the necessity for a road
28 link between the communities; and

29 **WHEREAS**, because of the former secretary's refusal to approve the road, federal
30 legislative authority for the land exchange and road construction expired on March 29, 2016,
31 making new federal legislation necessary to provide for the land exchange and road

1 construction; and

2 **WHEREAS** S. 3204 and H.R. 5777, introduced, respectively, by Senator Lisa
3 Murkowski and Representative Don Young, would once again provide federal legislative
4 authority for this long-awaited, lifesaving undertaking;

5 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature expresses its profound support
6 and appreciation for S. 3204, sponsored by Senator Lisa Murkowski and co-sponsored by
7 Senator Dan Sullivan, and H.R. 5777, sponsored by Representative Don Young; and be it

8 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully and strongly
9 urges the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives to pass these
10 measures swiftly and make possible the dramatic improvement to life and safety that the
11 residents of King Cove have sought for decades.

12 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the
13 Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative,
14 members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and all other members of the 115th United
15 States Congress.