

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ARCTIC POLICY,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM**

February 14, 2024  
8:00 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Thomas Baker, Chair  
Representative George Rauscher  
Representative Jesse Sumner  
Representative Cathy Tilton  
Representative Jennie Armstrong  
Representative Maxine Dibert

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Laddie Shaw

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 291

"An Act relating to reports of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act corporations."

- MOVED HB 291 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PRESENTATION: ARCTIC POLICY: AN ALASKA PERSPECTIVE

- HEARD

PRESENTATION(S): MARINE EXCHANGE OF ALASKA

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 291

SHORT TITLE: ANCSA REPORTS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) WRIGHT

01/24/24	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/24	(H)	AET
02/09/24	(H)	AET AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
02/09/24	(H)	Heard & Held
02/09/24	(H)	MINUTE (AET)
02/14/24	(H)	AET AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

**WITNESS REGISTER**

CURTIS MCQUEEN, Executive Director  
Alaska Native Village Corporation Association  
Wasilla, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 291.

REPRESENTATIVE STANLEY WRIGHT  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As prime sponsor, gave brief comment during the hearing on HB 291.

PAUL FUHS, Arctic Goodwill Ambassador  
Northern Forum  
Adak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave the presentation titled "Arctic Policy: an Alaska Perspective."

STEVE WHITE, Executive Director  
Marine Exchange of Alaska  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave the Marine Exchange of Alaska presentation.

EDRIC CARILLO, Director of External Affairs  
Marine Exchange of Alaska  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered a question during the Marine Exchange of Alaska presentation.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:00:24 AM](#)

CHAIR BAKER called the House Special Committee on Arctic Policy, Economic Development, and Tourism meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Representatives Baker, Rauscher, Tilton, Armstrong, and Dibert were present at the call to order. Representative Sumner arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**HB 291-ANCSA REPORTS**

[8:01:18 AM](#)

CHAIR BAKER announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 291, "An Act relating to reports of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act corporations."

[8:02:05 AM](#)

CHAIR BAKER opened public testimony on HB 291.

[8:02:19 AM](#)

CURTIS MCQUEEN, Executive Director, Alaska Native Village Corporation Association (ANVCA), testified that ANVCA submitted a letter voicing the organization's full support of HB 291. He emphasized his belief that HB 291 presented an "important remedy" to a challenge that is facing many Alaska Native corporations.

[8:04:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TILTON thanked Mr. McQueen for his testimony.

[8:06:12 AM](#)

CHAIR BAKER, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 291.

[8:06:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STANLEY WRIGHT, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, thanked the committee for hearing HB 291.

[8:07:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TILTON moved to report HB 291 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 291 was reported out of the House Special Committee On Arctic Policy, Economic Development, and Tourism.

[8:07:31 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:07 a.m. to 8:10 a.m.

**PRESENTATION: Arctic Policy: An Alaska Perspective**

[8:10:00 AM](#)

CHAIR BAKER announced that the next order of business would be a presentation, titled "Arctic Policy: an Alaska Perspective."

[8:10:08 AM](#)

PAUL FUHS, Arctic Goodwill Ambassador, Northern Forum, Gave the presentation, titled "Arctic Policy: an Alaska Perspective." He began the PowerPoint presentation [hardcopy included in the committee packet], on slides 1-3, which displayed a map of Alaska, along with an image of the Ursa Major constellation and explained how that specific constellation is significant to the presentation.

8:11:52 TIMESTAMP

The committee took an at-ease from 8:11 a.m. to 8:13 a.m.

8:13:52 TIMESTAMP

MR.FUHS resumed the presentation on slide 4, which displayed a map of the geographic region that is encompassed by the Arctic Circle. He skipped to slide 6, which addressed the concept of continental shelf extension occurring along the North American continent in its Arctic Region.

MR FUHS moved to slide 7, which touched on the proposal to station a United States Coast Guard icebreaker-class vessel at the Port of Nome, Alaska. He continued to slide 8, which explained the logistics of the construction of an icebreaker-class vessel.

[8:17:06 AM](#)

MR.FUHS moved to slide 9, which described Section 234 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and explained how it relates to Alaska's Arctic policy. He continued to slide 10, which highlighted the risk of piracy that an icebreaker-class vessel might experience when transiting certain regions of the globe.

MR. FUHS moved to slide 11, which aimed to describe the "twisted logic" of certain legal decisions pertaining to resource development in the Arctic. He continued through slides 12 and 13, which explained the 30x30x30 concept of conservation and described how it could be implemented in Alaska.

[8:22:09 AM](#)

MR. FUHS moved to slide 14, which touched on the topic of "discrimination in the Arctic" and explained what that term means with regard to Alaska's Arctic policy. He continued to slide 15, which touched on the recent divestment of the Goldman Sachs Bank in its Arctic development. He moved to slide 16, which highlighted specific legislative strategies that the Alaska State Legislature could take to forward the Arctic policy proposed in the presentation before the committee.

[8:25:48 AM](#)

MR. FUHS continued to slide 17, which explained the non-military international Arctic organizations and relationships that Alaska is or isn't yet apart of.

[8:32:33 AM](#)

MR. FUHS skipped to slide 19, which described the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and its impact on marine safety in Alaska's Arctic waters. He skipped to slide 21, which displayed a graph comparing different countries' Arctic oil exports by annual volume and moved to slide 26, which displayed an image of Russian rescue/salvage vessels. He continued to slide 27, where he briefly touched on the "Jones Act" as it relates to icebreakers operating in Alaska's Arctic Region.

[8:38:54 AM](#)

MR. FUHS backtracked to slide 23, which highlighted the joint-operated automatic identification system (AIS) currently being developed by the Marine Exchange of Alaska (MXAK) for use in the Arctic Ocean.

MR. FUHS skipped forward to slides 28 and 29, both of which emphasized the efforts being made by Russia and China to establish a foothold in the Arctic Region of the globe. He continued to slide 30, which displayed an image of a north slope oil module and explained the logistics of installation and operation.

[8:42:08 AM](#)

MR. FUHS moved to slide 31, which displayed a photo of a Russian icebreaker and continued to slide 32, which elaborated on the proposed development of liquified natural gas (LNG) plants in the Arctic Region.

MR. FUHS moved to slide 33, which showed a video of a Russian icebreaker moving through the Arctic ice and continued to slide 34, which displayed a map that highlighted the potential for Adak, Alaska, to become an international shipping hub. He moved through slides 34 and 35, both of which outlined current ship movements and shipping patterns throughout Alaska's Arctic Region. He concluded his presentation and offered to answer committee questions.

[8:46:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG asked Mr. Fuhs if he had any understanding behind the history of the United States Navy's little presence in Alaska.

MR. FUHS answered that there was historically a pressure from U.S. Congress for the United States Navy to downsize and remove its presence from Alaska.

[8:48:08 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:48 a.m. to 8:49 a.m.

**PRESENTATION(S) : MARINE EXCHANGE OF ALASKA**

[8:49:13 AM](#)

CHAIR BAKER announced that the final order of business would be the Marine Exchange of Alaska presentation.

[8:49:21 AM](#)

STEVE WHITE, Executive Director, Marine Exchange of Alaska, gave the presentation by the Marine Exchange of Alaska. He began the PowerPoint presentation [hardcopy included in the committee packet], on slide 3, which explained the history of the Marine Exchange of Alaska (MXAK) and continued to slides 4 and 5, which highlighted the various services that MXAK provides to enhance maritime awareness and safety in Alaska. He moved to slide 6, which emphasized the necessity for the proposed Arctic Watch program along Alaska's Arctic waters.

[8:53:13 AM](#)

MR. WHITE continued to slide 7, which highlighted the increased risk associated with a higher volume of ship traffic in the

Arctic and moved to slide 8, which emphasized that "regulations are not enough" in ensuring maritime safety in the Arctic. He continued to slide 9, which outlined a series of tools that the MXAK can utilize to mitigate the risk of passage in the Arctic and moved to slide 10, which expounded on the need to minimize passing ships' impact to surrounding wildlife. He continued to slide 11, which highlighted how MXAK goes about emergency assistance for vessels experiencing crises at sea.

[8:57:59 AM](#)

MR. WHITE moved to slide 12, which emphasized the risk of vessels passing through the Arctic with no traffic management and continued to slide 13, which displayed a map that highlighted the more efficient route taken by a vessel as a result of it participating in MXAK's at-sea traffic management system. He moved to slide 14, which touched on the task of preventing a disaster at sea and continued to slide 15, which explained the goals of the Arctic Watch program. Slide 16, which displayed a group photo of the MXAK's delegates at a Bering Sea convention and continued to slide 17, which listed a series of concerns that the MXAK would like to see addressed in the Arctic.

[9:03:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked where the group photo on slide 16 was taken.

[9:03:25 AM](#)

EDRIC CARILLO, Director of External Affairs, Marine Exchange of Alaska, proffered that the photo was taken in front of the Alaska State Archives in Juneau.

[9:03:40 AM](#)

MR. WHITE resumed the presentation on slide 18, which highlighted MXAK's efforts to respond to local concerns regarding maritime safety and continued to slide 19, which emphasized MXAK's concern to preserve Arctic Indigenous people's traditional way of life. He concluded the presentation on slide 20, which highlighted the "conduit" between vessels and coastal communities. He thanked the committee for its time and offered to answer questions.

CHAIR BAKER thanked Mr. White and Mr. Carillo and delivered committee announcements.

[9:06:22 AM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee On Arctic Policy, Economic Development, and Tourism meeting was adjourned at 9:06 a.m.