

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 7

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATOR KAWASAKI

Introduced: 1/24/24

Referred: State Affairs

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the President of the United States and the United States Secretary of the Interior**
2 **to maintain Denali as the official name for the tallest mountain in North America.**

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

4 **WHEREAS** Denali is the traditional Koyukon Athabaskan name for the tallest
5 mountain in North America; and

6 **WHEREAS** the name Denali is deeply ingrained in the state's culture and identity;
7 and

8 **WHEREAS** residents of the state believe that the names of the geographic features in
9 the state should be determined by state residents and representatives; and

10 **WHEREAS** the Athabaskan people and their ancestors have lived in the Interior of
11 the state for more than 10,000 years; and

12 **WHEREAS** Denali, the traditional Koyukon Athabaskan name, meaning "the high
13 one," was designated as the official name for North America's tallest mountain in 1975 by the
14 state; and

15 **WHEREAS** state lawmakers petitioned the United States Board on Geographic
16 Names to change the mountain's name to "Denali" in 1975, and, in 2015, the United States

1 officially adopted the name Denali for the mountain; and

2 **WHEREAS** residents of the state from all backgrounds and political persuasions
3 embrace Denali as the rightful name for the tallest mountain in North America; and

4 **WHEREAS** residents of the state take pride in the fact that people outside the state
5 also recognize Denali as the mountain's well-established name; and

6 **WHEREAS** both Denali National Park and the mountain are well-known and
7 established landmarks, and changing the mountain's name could cause confusion and
8 negatively affect tourism in the state; and

9 **WHEREAS** there were once hundreds of languages spoken by Alaska Native peoples,
10 many of which are still used by their descendants today; and

11 **WHEREAS** the use of, and names and terms from, Athabaskan languages have a rich
12 legacy in the Interior and Canada; and

13 **WHEREAS** traditional Indigenous names for certain geographic features, places, and
14 communities are commonly used by local, state, and federal government agencies in the state;
15 and

16 **WHEREAS** residents of the state understand that the use of Indigenous names
17 throughout the state reflects the long history, diverse cultures, traditions, and languages of the
18 state's Alaska Native peoples; and

19 **WHEREAS** changing the name of the mountain from Denali to Mount McKinley
20 would be costly and disrespectful to residents of the state, especially Alaska Natives peoples;
21 and

22 **WHEREAS** President McKinley, after whom the mountain was previously named,
23 never visited the mountain and has no significant historical connection to the mountain or to
24 the state;

25 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully urges the President
26 of the United States and the United States Secretary of the Interior to maintain Denali as the
27 name for the tallest mountain in North America and that action to rename the mountain not be
28 taken.

29 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Donald J. Trump, President
30 of the United States; the Honorable J. D. Vance, Vice President of the United States and
31 President of the U.S. Senate; United States Secretary of the Interior; and the Honorable Lisa

- 1 Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Nick Begich,
- 2 U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.