

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

April 14, 2025

3:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair
Senator Bill Wielechowski, Vice Chair
Senator Matt Claman
Senator Forrest Dunbar
Senator Scott Kawasaki
Senator Shelley Hughes
Senator Robert Myers

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 11(RES) AM
Recognizing and honoring the relationship between Canada and
Alaska.

- MOVED CSHJR 11(RES) AM OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19
Urging the United States Congress to honor the terms of the
Mineral Leasing Act and the Alaska Statehood Act and provide the
state with a 90 percent share of all bonuses, royalties, and
rentals received by the federal government from the Arctic
National Wildlife Refuge and the National Petroleum Reserve in
Alaska.

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 18
Urging the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources,
division of forestry and fire protection, the Department of
Public Safety, municipalities of the state and relevant wildfire
planning and response agencies, and the Alaska delegation in
Congress to prepare for the 2025 wildfire season.

- HEARD & HELD

SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 139

"An Act relating to who may own or hold certain land; relating to certain agreements having to do with critical infrastructure; and providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HJR 11

SHORT TITLE: RECOGNIZING ALASKA/CANADA RELATIONSHIP

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) KOPP

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| 02/26/25 | (H) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS |
| 02/26/25 | (H) | RES |
| 03/10/25 | (H) | RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124 |
| 03/10/25 | (H) | -- MEETING CANCELED -- |
| 03/14/25 | (H) | RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124 |
| 03/14/25 | (H) | Moved CSHJR 11(RES) Out of Committee |
| 03/14/25 | (H) | MINUTE(RES) |
| 03/17/25 | (H) | RES RPT CS(RES) 7DP 1NR |
| 03/17/25 | (H) | DP: FIELDS, HALL, ELAM, RAUSCHER, MEARS, DIBERT, BURKE |
| 03/17/25 | (H) | NR: COULOMBE |
| 03/24/25 | (H) | TRANSMITTED TO (S) |
| 03/24/25 | (H) | VERSION: CSHJR 11(RES) AM |
| 03/26/25 | (S) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS |
| 03/26/25 | (S) | RES |
| 03/31/25 | (S) | RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205 |
| 03/31/25 | (S) | Heard & Held |
| 03/31/25 | (S) | MINUTE(RES) |
| 04/14/25 | (S) | RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205 |

BILL: SJR 19

SHORT TITLE: ANWR & NAT'L PETRO RESERVE: STATE SHARE

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) BJORKMAN

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| 04/10/25 | (S) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS |
| 04/10/25 | (S) | RES |
| 04/11/25 | (S) | RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205 |
| 04/11/25 | (S) | Heard & Held |
| 04/11/25 | (S) | MINUTE(RES) |
| 04/14/25 | (S) | RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205 |

BILL: SJR 18

SHORT TITLE: WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

SPONSOR(s): RESOURCES

04/02/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/02/25 (S) RES
04/14/25 (S) RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK KOPP, District 10
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HJR 11.

LAURA ACHEE, Staff
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a brief overview of SJR 19.

INTIMAYO HARBISON, Staff
Senator Cathy Giessel
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented SJR 18 on behalf of the Senate Resources Committee, Senator Giessel, Chair.

NORM MCDONALD, Deputy Director
Division of Forestry and Fire Protection
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SJR 18.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:31:26 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Dunbar, Kawasaki, Myers, Wielechowski, Hughes and Chair Giessel. Senator Claman arrived immediately thereafter.

HJR 11-RECOGNIZING ALASKA/CANADA RELATIONSHIP

[3:32:20 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 11(RES) am Recognizing and honoring the relationship between Canada and Alaska.

[3:32:52 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK KOPP, District 10, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said that HJR 11 is a nonpartisan acknowledgement of the strong commitment between Alaska and Canada. He noted the strong working relationship that exists. He stated that HJR 11 recognizes the bonds of trade, security, and friendship that stretch across borders and acknowledges the thousands of jobs, communities, and families that depend on cross-border cooperation. He stated that HJR 11 sends a clear message that Alaska values and stands by Canada in both easeful and challenging times. He acknowledged that some would see this as a symbolic gesture. He disagreed with this and stated that HJR 11 is a reaffirmation of Alaska's commitment to diplomacy, economic stability, and mutual respect between Canada and Alaska. He stated that HJR 11 is a call for continued collaboration, stewarding shared resources and strengthening industries. HJR 11 would ensure that US and Canadian policies do not harm the region. He emphasized that Canada and Alaska are not only neighbors but also partners, allies, and friends.

[3:34:47 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL opened public testimony on HJR 11; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[3:35:03 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL solicited the will of the committee.

[3:35:09 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI moved to report CSHJR 11(RES) am, work order [34-LS0532\H.A], from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). He gave authorization for Legislative Legal Services to make technical and conforming changes.

[3:35:27 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL found no objection and CSHJR 11(RES) am was reported from the Senate Resources Standing Committee.

SJR 19-ANWR & NAT'L PETRO RESERVE: STATE SHARE

[3:35:52 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL announced the consideration of SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19 Urging the United States Congress to honor the terms of the Mineral Leasing Act and the Alaska Statehood Act and provide the state with a 90 percent share of all bonuses, royalties, and rentals received by the federal government from

the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska.

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LAURA ACHEE, Staff, Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said that Congress debated Alaska's statehood with the awareness that the federal government had previously claimed a large portion of valuable land in the region. In addition, Congress was aware that the small population, remote location, and large geographic size meant that the state would not have sufficient population and/or industry to support itself from taxes alone. Therefore, the Alaska Statehood Act addressed this by granting the State of Alaska a 90 percent revenue share from the production of minerals (including oil and gas) on federal lands. SJR 19 urges Congress to hold to that promise. She noted that, according to the statehood agreement, the State of Alaska is due those revenues. She also pointed out that the state is experiencing fiscal challenges.

[3:37:30 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL asked for confirmation that currently, the revenues are evenly split, with 50 percent going to the State of Alaska. She shared her understanding that Alaska's share is received as a pass-through, which goes directly to the impacted communities on federal land.

[3:37:46 PM](#)

MS. ACHEE shared her understanding that this is region dependent. She said that the revenues from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) (which was a part of the Statehood Act, and which fell under the Mineral Leasing Act), was changed to an even 50-50 split. She added that SJR 19 also addresses the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska (NPR-A), which was not part of the Statehood Act and did not come under the Mineral Leasing Act. Revenues from NPR-A are also an even 50-50 split. She said that Alaska faces the same issues with regard to supporting NPR-A (e.g. write-offs that result against revenues for production on those lands); therefore, NPR-A is included in SJR 19.

[3:38:51 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL opened public testimony on SJR 19; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[3:39:13 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL held SJR 19 in committee.

SJR 18-WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

[3:39:30 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL announced the consideration of SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 18 Urging the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, division of forestry and fire protection, the Department of Public Safety, municipalities of the state and relevant wildfire planning and response agencies, and the Alaska delegation in Congress to prepare for the 2025 wildfire season.

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INTIMAYO HARBISON, Staff, Senator Cathy Giessel, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said that SJR 18 underscores the critical need for enhanced wildfire preparedness in Alaska. He explained that, in recent years, wildfire season in Alaska has increased in severity. He noted that many other states are also experiencing increased wildfire risk. He reiterated that SJR 18 emphasizes the need for wildfire preparedness.

[3:40:58 PM](#)

MR. HARBISON directed attention to SJR 18, page 2, lines 23-27:

[Original punctuation provided.]

BE IT RESOLVED that, in preparation for the 2025 wildfire season, the Alaska State Legislature urges the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, division of forestry and fire protection, and relevant municipal and local agencies to enhance wildfire preparedness and response coordination by reviewing and developing comprehensive interagency wildfire response plans specific to high-risk wildland-urban interface communities;

MR. HARBISON read from SJR 18, page 3, lines 4-7:

[Original punctuation provided.]

FURTHER RESOLVED that, in preparation for the 2025 wildfire season, the Alaska State Legislature urges the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, division of forestry and fire protection, and relevant municipal and local agencies to expand public outreach and education

MR. HARBISON explained that Alaska lacks wildfire preparedness education and outreach.

[3:41:35 PM](#)

MR. HARBISON directed attention to SJR 18, page 3, lines 13-15 and emphasized the need for emergency response and evacuation drills. He pointed to the recent wildfires in California as evidence for the need for evacuation plans. He stated that wildfires can grow out of control faster than communities can evacuate. Preparedness is key to preventing loss of life and property.

MR. HARBISON directed attention to SJR 18, page 3, lines 20-23 and said this section encourages the governor and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and local agencies to bolster fire suppression resources across Alaska. He then turned to SJR 18, page 3, lines 27-30 and explained that this section encourages the governor, DNR, and local agencies to improve fire detection and early warning systems. He directed attention to SJR 18, page 4, lines 2-4 and stated that this section encourages Alaska's congressional delegation and other federal representatives to advocate for increased federal funding to support Alaska's wildfire prevention and mitigation efforts.

[3:43:45 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked who would receive copies of SJR 18. Specifically, he asked whether SJR 18 would be sent to North Pole, Alaska. He wondered if the recipient list in the resolution is inclusive.

[3:44:15 PM](#)

MR. HARBISON replied that the recipient list in SJR 18 is non-comprehensive and additional communities could be added.

[3:44:37 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL said that [associate professor Jen Schmidt at the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage] has developed a wildfire prediction model capable of determining the direction a fire would take as it swept through the Hillside neighborhood in Anchorage. She opined that this is very interesting and noted the level of detailed information Ms. Schmidt's models provide. She shared her understanding that Chugach Electric has added sensing devices to utility poles to detect fires. She noted a recent incident in Bear Valley in which a utility pole came down during a winter windstorm and the electrical device ignited. She emphasized the risk of wildfires regardless of season. She said the Municipality of Anchorage's Firewise Home Assessment program has been highly publicized and more residents are building

defensible perimeters around their homes as a result. She noted that the Anchorage Regional Landfill Wood Lot would be free for residents in 2025. However, she was uncertain about wildfire preparations in other municipalities.

[3:46:19 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS said that Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA) is proactively planning for wildfires; however, right-of-way boundaries have created challenges, particularly with downed trees. He pointed out that downed trees have caused wildfires in the past. He said there is interest in maintaining defensible spaces and public education has been a priority. He said the focus has been on education and expressed uncertainty about whether specific changes are underway for fire season. He noted discussions about evacuation planning. He stated that, while he is aware that changes are underway, he does not have full details.

[3:48:11 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES mentioned Kenai Peninsula and Big Lake fires and emphasized that fire is always a concern. She said she is unaware of any specific plans related to planning. She expressed concern about potential fires in the Hillside neighborhood in Anchorage. She opined that it is wise to maximize wildfire preparedness, particularly in areas with a high concentration of homes.

[3:48:55 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN commented that both Southeast and Southcentral Alaska have experienced lower-than-average snowfall during the current (2024-2025) winter season, which often leads to drier summer conditions. He noted recent fires in Los Angeles, California and fires in various parts of Alaska. He stated that these fires serve as reminders of the real potential for wildfires and emphasized the importance of preparedness. He indicated support for SJR 18.

[3:49:54 PM](#)

NORM MCDONALD, Deputy Director, Division of Forestry and Fire Protection, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Palmer, Alaska, said that DNR provides the Kenai Peninsula, Denali, Anchorage, Mat-Su, and Fairbanks Northstar Boroughs with funding for woody debris lots. In addition, DNR hosts debris lots in Tok, Delta, and Copper River. He said this is part of a statewide effort to decrease on-site woody debris fires and increase fire safety.

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CHAIR GIESSEL emphasized the usefulness of this program, which is free of charge for 2025.

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CHAIR GIESSEL opened public testimony on SJR 18; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[3:51:11 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL held SJR 18 in committee.

[3:51:26 PM](#)

MR. HARBISON directed attention to supporting documents for SJR 18, particularly the Arctic Urban Risks and Adaptations (AURA) wildfire factsheets prepared by Robert Zeal (University of Alaska). He noted that these documents address wildfires in and around Fairbanks and Anchorage. He also directed attention to the Public Order, Emergency Declaration of Fire Season, signed by Jeremy Douse (State Forester and Division Director with DNR). He stated that SJR 18 is an attempt to support those efforts.

[3:52:52 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Giessel adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 3:52 p.m.