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Referred; Resources

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PETTYJOHN, NAVARRE AND WALLIS

1 IN THE HOUSE

2

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 53 am

3

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4

FOURTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5

Relating to the United States and Soviet

6

Union boundary dispute and the resources

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in the area under dispute.

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

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WHEREAS the Navarin Basin oil and gas lease sale in April 1984, re-
sulted in total accepted bids of \$631,200,000, of which \$108,174,000 was
for an area claimed by the Soviet Union; and

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WHEREAS the winning bidders for the 17 tracts in the area claimed by
the Soviet Union not only are precluded from exploring for oil and gas in
these valuable seabed areas, but their bid deposit money is being held in a
suspense account by the U.S. Department of the Interior and is yielding
only the U.S. Treasury rate of return; and

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WHEREAS there are hundreds of American jobs at stake at the drilling
sites and at industry support sites; and

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WHEREAS the question of territorial jurisdiction also has implications
for bottom fishery operations for American fishermen; and

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WHEREAS the normal depiction of lines on the globe are by the arc of a
great circle, especially when they involve great distances in the open
ocean, such as the 1867 Convention Line marking the boundary between the
United States and Russia; and

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WHEREAS the U.S. Department of State's International Boundary Study
#14 ("U.S. - Russia Convention Line of 1867"), which was published in 1965,
depicted the 1867 Convention Line by arcs of a great circle; and

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WHEREAS discussions have been conducted between the U.S. Department of
State and the Soviet Government over this issue since 1981, with the latest

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1 round being held in Moscow on July 23 and 24, 1984, with the American
2 delegation led by Davis R. Robinson, the Legal Adviser of the U.S. Depart-
3 ment of State; and

4 WHEREAS Article IV, Sec. 3 of the United States Constitution provides
5 that "The Congress shall have power to dispose of and make all needful
6 rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging
7 to the United States"; and

8 WHEREAS the western-most limit to the oil and gas leasing program of
9 the U.S. Department of the Interior for the Outer Continental Shelf in the
10 Bering Sea has been set by the U.S. Department of State at the U.S. -
11 Russia Convention Line of 1867; and

12 WHEREAS the leasing program involving the 1867 Convention Line in the
13 Bering Sea includes the Navarin Basin and the Norton Basin; and

14 WHEREAS there are highly significant oil and gas deposits estimated by
15 the U.S. Department of the Interior in these basins; and

16 WHEREAS these potential hydrocarbon energy deposits are a vital part
17 of the future energy production for the United States and its goal of
18 energy independence; and

19 WHEREAS the leasing schedule for sales of oil and gas includes the
20 Navarin Basin in April 1984 and March 1986, the St. George Basin in May
21 1985 and April 1987, and the Norton Basin in December 1985; and

22 WHEREAS the area is estimated to contain approximately 100,000 tons of
23 sustainable yield of pollock that is presently being fished exclusively by
24 foreign fishing fleets; and

25 WHEREAS during the announcement of the Navarin Basin's April 1984
26 sale, the U.S. Department of the Interior revealed that the Soviet Union
27 was demanding part of the Outer Continental Shelf in the Navarin Basin and
28 that the U.S. Department of State was requiring that the proposed oil and
29 gas lease sales in the area claimed by the Soviet Government be held in

1 abeyance, that is, the bids received and retained but the leases not award-
2 ed until the matter is resolved; and

3 WHEREAS the Federal Register announcement described the dispute as
4 follows:

5 "The differing claims relate to differing depictions of the line
6 established by the 1867 Convention Ceding Alaska between the United
7 States and Russia. The United States depicts the 1867 Convention Line
8 as the maritime boundary by arcs of a great circle while the Soviet
9 Union depicts the 1867 Convention Line as rhumb lines."; and

10 WHEREAS the area of the Outer Continental Shelf demanded by the Soviet
11 Union between the arc-of-a-great-circle and the rhumb-line depictions in
12 the Bering Sea amounts to approximately 18,000 square miles; and

13 WHEREAS an agreement to concede this area to the Soviet Union would
14 contribute to the petroleum production and bottom fishery potential of the
15 Soviet Union; fishery potential

16 BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature finds that it is in
17 the best interests of the United States and of the State of Alaska that the
18 U.S. Department of State not yield to the demands of the Soviet Union to
19 set the western-most Outer Continental Shelf limit of the United States in
20 the Bering Sea by a rhumb-line depiction rather than the arc-of-a-great-
21 circle depiction of the U.S. - Russia Convention Line of 1867; and be it

22 FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be understood as the sentiments
23 of the State of Alaska concerning the interests of the United States in
24 adhering to the arc-of-a-great-circle depiction in the diplomatic dis-
25 cussions regarding the question; and be it

26 FURTHER RESOLVED the United States Department of State is urged to
27 adopt a firm stance and aggressively pursue a resolution of the Bering Sea
28 Boundary dispute favorable to the interests of the government and the
29 people of the United States.

1 COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Ronald
2 Reagan, President of the United States, to the Honorable George Bush,
3 Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate; to
4 the Honorable George Shultz, Secretary of State; to the Honorable Donald
5 Hodel, Secretary of the Interior; and Mr. William Bettenberg, director,
6 Minerals Management Service; to the Honorable John S. Herrington, Secretary
7 of Energy; to the Honorable Malcom Baldrige, Secretary of Commerce; to the
8 Honorable Walter B. Jones, Chairman, House Committee on Merchant Marine and
9 Fisheries; to the Honorable John C. Danforth, Chairman, Senate Committee on
10 Commerce, Science and Transportation; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and
11 the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young,
12 U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.