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1 IN THE SENATE

BY FISCHER

2 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 61

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 FIFTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5 Requesting the Government of the United
6 States to reassert jurisdiction over
7 Wrangel Island, Herald Island, Henrietta
8 Island, Jeannette Island, and Bennett
9 Island together with the surrounding
10 outer continental shelf within the
11 American waters of the Chukchi Sea and
12 the East Siberian Seas and to pay the
13 State of Alaska compensation for damages
14 from their loss.

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

16 WHEREAS Alaskans and other Americans remain justifiably grateful for
17 the fortitude shown by Captain Thomas Long and the crew of the whaling bark
18 "NILE" from New London, Connecticut who, on August 14, 1867, were the first
19 to confirm the existence of a 1,740 square mile island in the Chukchi Sea;
20 and

21 WHEREAS Wrangel Island, named by Captain Long after the former gover-
22 nor of Russian Alaska Baron Ferdinand Petrovich von Wrangel, is located
23 some 270 miles northwest of Cape Lisburne, Alaska and is larger than the
24 State of Rhode Island; and

25 WHEREAS Captain Long was the first to sight and to describe Wrangel
26 Island, and the first recorded landing on the island occurred August 12,
27 1881, when Captain Calvin L. Hooper, commander of the Bering Sea Patrol, a
28 division of the U.S. Treasury Department and as such, the de facto governor
29 of Alaska, landed at Clark River on the eastern coast of Wrangel Island

1 and, with his fellow officers and John Muir (who later founded the Sierra
2 Club) raised the American flag and took possession of the island in the
3 name of the United States; and

4 WHEREAS Captain Hooper was engaged in a Congressionally sponsored
5 effort to rescue the "JEANNETTE," a vessel engaged in Arctic research that
6 was locked in ice floes and subsequently lost and therefore Captain Hooper
7 had the authority to claim Wrangel Island for the United States; and

8 WHEREAS Wrangel Island became a part of the United States by right of
9 confirmed discovery and first possession and, later, a permanent settle-
10 ment; and

11 WHEREAS Wrangel Island and its nearby satellite island Herald Island
12 were placed by the United States Coast and Geodetic Service within the
13 District and later Territory and State of Alaska in publications from 1900
14 through 1977; and

15 WHEREAS the De Long Islands of Henrietta, Jeannette, and Bennett were
16 first discovered in the East Siberian Sea and were claimed and named by
17 U.S. Navy Commander George W. De Long during his 1879 - 1881 expedition
18 into the Arctic where the commander and his crew died when their ship, the
19 "JEANNETTE," was crushed and sunk by ice floes; and

20 WHEREAS the first permanent settlement on Wrangel Island occurred when
21 the American ship "SILVER WAVE" landed a party on the island on
22 September 15, 1921, and raised the American flag over the island under the
23 direction of Captain Jack Hammer; and

24 WHEREAS the party from the "SILVER WAVE" landed with provisions for
25 only six months as they stated that they planned to sustain themselves by
26 hunting; and

27 WHEREAS the relief vessel in 1922 was blocked by ice floes; and

28 WHEREAS when the relief vessel "DONALDSON" arrived on August 23, 1923,
29 the only survivor of the 1921 expedition was an Eskimo seamstress named Ada

1 "Blackjack" Johnson, who died just a few years ago in Alaska; and
2 WHEREAS a new party led by Charles Wells of Uniontown, Pennsylvania
3 continued settlement on Wrangel Island; and
4 WHEREAS on May 13, 1924, Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes
5 stated that the American Lomen Brothers were the proprietary owners of
6 Wrangel Island; and
7 WHEREAS on August 20, 1924, an armed party from the Soviet gunboat
8 "RED OCTOBER" landed on Wrangel Island, took Wells and the other Americans
9 by force, and told them that they were being returned to Alaska; and
10 WHEREAS notwithstanding their promises, they took the Americans to
11 Vladivostok and confiscated the pelts that the American trappers had accu-
12 mulated during the 12 bitter months on the island; and
13 WHEREAS the Americans who survived their ordeal in Vladivostok were
14 released following the intervention of the American consul at Harbin,
15 Manchuria but Charles Wells and two residents of Alaska died while detained
16 by the Soviet government; and
17 WHEREAS the residents of Alaska who survived their ordeal in Soviet
18 Siberia were all from Golovin Bay, Alaska and they survived notwithstanding
19 the severe physical and emotional trauma resulting from the assault, kid-
20 napping, false imprisonment, theft of property together with other vio-
21 lations of American and Alaska law by the agents of the Soviet regime; and
22 WHEREAS after seizing Wrangel Island, the Soviet government proceeded
23 to seize more American soil by occupying the nearby and defenseless Herald
24 Island; and
25 WHEREAS the Soviet government subsequently asserted a spurious claim
26 to the American De Long Islands of Henrietta, Jeannette, and Bennett; and
27 WHEREAS these illegal acts by the Soviet government interrupted 57
28 years of peaceful use of these islands by American seamen, herders, and
29 hunters; and

1 WHEREAS the Soviet occupation of what they refer to as Ostrova De Long
2 is an affront to all Americans, is an insult to the memory of their brave
3 discoverer, and a source of embarrassment to the United States Navy, which
4 memorializes his memory at the Naval Academy in Annapolis; and

5 WHEREAS the soil of all five of these American islands and their
6 surrounding continental shelf has been held by military force in contra-
7 vention of international law and by conduct that is contrary to what is
8 recognized as proper by civilized nations; and

9 WHEREAS the Soviet government has typified its uncivilized conduct by
10 establishing forced labor camps on Wrangel Island as reported in testimony
11 before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee in January 1973; and

12 WHEREAS it has been reported that Wrangel Island was the last known
13 place of imprisonment of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish Consul in Budapest,
14 Hungary at the end of World War II who was arrested by Soviet forces and
15 who was responsible for saving the lives of thousands of European Jews from
16 the Nazi Holocaust; and

17 WHEREAS this conduct on American soil has continued in defiance of
18 American law as well as in defiance of the international rules of conduct
19 resulting from the Nuremberg war crime trials after World War II; and

20 WHEREAS the continuing trespass by the Soviet government deprives the
21 State of Alaska and its people of their fundamental right to use the is-
22 lands of Wrangel, Herald, Henrietta, Jeannette, and Bennett together with
23 the surrounding continental shelf and its valuable resources; and

24 WHEREAS unlike the governments of Canada and Great Britain, the United
25 States has never surrendered its claims of sovereignty over these islands;
26 and

27 WHEREAS the State of Alaska does not believe that agreements between
28 the United States and the Soviet Union, whether they be secret or other-
29 wise, can affect American claims to these islands until they have been

1 ratified by the United States Senate;

2 BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that the Government of
3 the United States assert and reassert American sovereignty over Wrangel
4 Island, Herald Island, and the De Long Islands of Henrietta, Jeannette, and
5 Bennett, their resources, and their territorial shelf in behalf of the
6 American people; and be it

7 FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government of the United States make satis-
8 factory compensation and restitution to the State of Alaska and its people
9 for the loss of this territory resulting from the neglect of the United
10 States Government to protect American lives and property when the lands
11 were seized in 1924; and be it

12 FURTHER RESOLVED that the State of Alaska asserts and reasserts its
13 claim to Wrangel Island, Herald Island, and the De Long Islands of
14 Henrietta, Jeannette, and Bennett and their surrounding continental shelf
15 as an integral part of the State of Alaska; and be it

16 FURTHER RESOLVED the Governor of the State of Alaska is requested to
17 initiate appropriate legal claims for relief before the U.S. Foreign Claims
18 Settlement Commission, the U.S. Court of Claims or other legal forums of
19 the United States as may be appropriate.

20 COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Ronald
21 Reagan, President of the United States; to the Honorable George P. Shultz,
22 Secretary of State; to the Honorable George Bush, Vice-President of the
23 United States and President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Jim Wright,
24 Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; and to the Honorable Ted
25 Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable
26 Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Con-
27 gress.