

**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 36**  
**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA**  
**SEVENTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION**

**BY REPRESENTATIVES MACLEAN, Hudson, Jacko, Koponen, Donley, Finkelstein, Brown, Ivan, Kubina, Ulmer**

**Introduced: 4/2/91**

**Referred: House Special Committee on Oil and Gas, Resources**

**A RESOLUTION**

**1 Relating to off-shore oil exploration, development, and tanker transportation activities in**  
**2 the Beaufort and Chukchi seas.**

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

**4 WHEREAS the state supports the prudent and orderly development of the state's oil and gas**  
**5 reserves in an environmentally sound manner; and**

**6 WHEREAS the state has been responsive to the nation's need to decrease its dependence on**  
**7 foreign oil; and**

**8 WHEREAS the oil industry has demonstrated that properly regulated onshore oil and gas**  
**9 exploration, development, and transportation can occur in an environmentally sound manner; and**

**10 WHEREAS there is a high probability that the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife**  
**11 Refuge contains economically recoverable oil reserves; and**

**12 WHEREAS, following the expedited environmental assessment by the Outer Continental Shelf**  
**13 Task Force, the President announced in June 1990 the closure until the year 2000 of large outer**  
**14 continental shelf tracts off the coast of California, Florida, New England, and the Northwest to oil and**  
**15 gas leasing and activities; and**

**16 WHEREAS, without having subjected Alaskan water to a similar environmental assessment, the**

1 federal government proposes to conduct in June and August of 1991 oil and gas lease sales in the  
2 Beaufort and Chukchi seas totalling more than 40,000,000 acres; and

3       **WHEREAS** Alaskan water, particularly arctic water, deserves the same scrutiny regarding the  
4 wisdom and environmental safety of oil and gas activities as was given to water offshore of the  
5 continental states; and

6       **WHEREAS** the Beaufort and Chukchi seas are among the world's most dynamic and relatively  
7 unspoiled wildlife habitats, containing critical feeding and breeding grounds, rest and brooding areas,  
8 and migratory corridors where a wide variety of marine mammal, bird, and fish species concentrate; and

9       **WHEREAS** land adjoining the arctic water has been the home of the Inupiat Eskimo people for  
10 countless generations; and

11       **WHEREAS** the Inupiat largely derive their nutritional needs and cultural identity through the  
12 traditional harvest of marine species, particularly the endangered bowhead whale and other marine  
13 mammals; and

14       **WHEREAS** an oil spill in the Arctic could cause irreparable damage to the marine resources in  
15 these waters and thus devastate the people of North and Northwest Alaska; and

16       **WHEREAS** the limited amount of well designed and successfully conducted scientific research  
17 that has been conducted in the Arctic has indicated that marine mammals and birds react to industrial  
18 noise, including noise for drilling, seismic activity, and icebreaker and other vessel disturbances, with  
19 effects and potential threats to their well-being not yet fully understood; and

20       **WHEREAS** the arctic environment is characterized by extreme weather conditions, including  
21 prolonged ice cover and darkness, frigid temperatures, high winds and waves, and low visibility; and

22       **WHEREAS** effective oil spill response options for remote arctic water remain undemonstrated  
23 as has been acknowledged by the Alaska Oil Spill Commission, the Arctic Research Commission, and  
24 the Mineral Management Service itself; and

25       **WHEREAS** the Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet spills and the many recent significant  
26 spills in the continental states evidence both the insufficiency of the oil industry's preventative safety  
27 measures, and the industry's inability to respond effectively to a major spill in even less remote, warmer,  
28 well-lit, ice-free waters where hundreds of private citizens and vessels have aided in response efforts;  
29 and

30       **WHEREAS**, even with the formulation of industry spill contingency plan and response  
31 requirements, as mandated by legislation passed during the 1990 legislative session, there remains a lack  
32 of the community response preparedness vital to a rapid response, containment, and cleanup effort

1 following a spill; and

2       **WHEREAS** a major oil spill, particularly the result of a tanker accident or late season well  
3 blowout, could have multi-year devastating effects on the sensitive arctic marine environment, wildlife  
4 resources, and subsistence lifestyle of the Inupiat people; and

5       **WHEREAS** the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, P.L. 101-380, 104 Stat. 484, directed the Secretary  
6 of the Interior, in consultation with the Governor of Alaska, to prepare an extensive report on a variety  
7 of issues relating to offshore oil spill contingency planning in the Arctic, with particular attention to be  
8 given to Native concerns; and

9       **WHEREAS** the report will likely be published no later than May 1991 and could clearly serve  
10 as the initial step in conducting the essential environmental assessment that arctic water has yet to be  
11 subjected to; and

12       **WHEREAS** the Secretary of the Interior is therefore charged with producing a landmark  
13 comprehensive report to the Congress on the state of oil spill contingency planning in arctic water, at  
14 the same time the secretary is preparing to offer for lease a short time after the report is due to be  
15 published more than 40,000,000 acres of offshore tracts in those same arctic waters without the benefit  
16 of his own, the Congress', or the public's review of that report;

17       **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature believes that the oil industry does not have  
18 the ability to adequately respond to, contain, or clean up a significant oil spill in arctic water under  
19 commonly occurring environmental conditions; and be it

20       **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature recognizes the potentially harmful  
21 effects of industrial noise and oil spills on the arctic marine environment, wildlife resources, and the  
22 Inupiat Eskimo culture; and be it

23       **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature believes that the oil industry does not  
24 have, or at least has yet to conclusively demonstrate, the ability to adequately respond to, contain, or  
25 clean up a significant oil spill in arctic water under commonly occurring environmental conditions; and  
26 be it

27       **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature recognizes the need and the right to  
28 have Alaskan water, particularly in the Arctic, subjected to the same environmental risk assessment that  
29 has been applied to water offshore of the continental states; and be it

30       **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature believes that the Secretary of the  
31 Interior should not proceed with planned offshore lease sales in the Arctic until he, the Congress, and  
32 the public have the opportunity to review the report that he himself has been directed by the Congress

1 to produce on oil spill contingency planning in the Arctic.

2 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable George Bush, President of the United  
3 States; to the Honorable Dan Quayle, Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S.  
4 Senate; to the Honorable Thomas S. Foley, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; to the  
5 Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr., Secretary of the Interior; to Barry Williamson, Director of the Minerals  
6 Management Service; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S.  
7 Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in  
8 Congress.