

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 36 (RESOURCES)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

SEVENTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Offered: 5/13/91

Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES MACLEAN, Hudson, Jacko, Koponen, Donley, Finkelstein, Brown, Ivan, Kubina, Ulmer

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 there is a high probability that economically recoverable oil reserves exist onshore;
9 and**

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

**12 WHEREAS, following an 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 coasts of California, Florida, New England, and the Northwest to oil and
15 gas leasing and activities; and**

16 WHEREAS the Outer Continental Shelf Task Force has not yet been asked by the President to

1 complete a similar environmental assessment for off-shore areas totalling some 40,000,000 acres in the
2 Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, which are scheduled for leasing by the federal government in 1991; and

3 **WHEREAS** Alaskan water, particularly arctic water, deserves the same, if not higher, scrutiny
4 regarding the wisdom and environmental safety of oil and gas activities as was given to water offshore
5 of the contiguous 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** the Inupiat people largely derive their nutritional needs and cultural identity through
10 the traditional harvest of marine species, particularly the endangered bowhead whale and other marine
11 mammals; and

12 **WHEREAS** the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas are characterized by extreme weather conditions,
13 including prolonged ice cover and darkness, frigid temperatures, high winds and waves, and low
14 visibility; and

15 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Oil Spill Commission, the Arctic Research Commission, and the Minerals
16 Management Service have each acknowledged that effective oil spill response options under certain arctic
17 conditions for remote arctic waters remain undemonstrated; and

18 **WHEREAS** the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, P.L. 101-380, 104 Stat. 484, directed the Secretary
19 of the Interior, in consultation with the Governor of Alaska, to prepare an extensive report on a variety
20 of issues relating to offshore oil spill contingency planning in the Arctic, including compilations of
21 known data relating to potentially affected wildlife resources; existing drilling and spill response
22 technology; past, present, and proposed exploratory operations; and, specifically, Native Alaskan
23 concerns; and

24 **WHEREAS** initial scientific data indicates that marine mammals and birds in the Arctic react
25 to industrial noises, including noise from drilling, icebreaker, seismic activities, aircraft overflights and
26 other vessel disturbances;

27 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature believes that the oil industry has yet to
28 conclusively demonstrate the ability to adequately respond to, contain, or clean up a significant oil spill
29 in arctic water under commonly occurring environmental conditions; and be it

30 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature believes that lease sales in the
31 Beaufort and Chukchi Seas must be approached in an extremely cautious way with complete participation
32 by the people residing in the affected areas who are the most knowledgeable about arctic conditions; and

1 be it

2 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska Legislature believes that the report mandated by the
3 Congress in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 should be reviewed and an environmental assessment of
4 offshore industrial operations in the Arctic be conducted before further oil and gas exploration and
5 development activities take place in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas; and be it

6 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature believes that more research is needed,
7 and urges industry to continue to undertake that research, focusing on the unique and unpredictable
8 conditions found in the Arctic, in terms of oil spill contingency plans and the effect of exploration and
9 development in general as well as specific research to determine the effect of industrial noise on marine
10 mammals and especially on the bowhead whale.

11 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable George Bush, President of the United
12 States; to the Honorable Dan Quayle, Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S.
13 Senate; to the Honorable Robert C. Byrd, President Pro Tempore of the U. S. Senate; to the Honorable
14 George J. Mitchell, Majority Leader of the U. S. Senate; to the Honorable Thomas S. Foley, Speaker
15 of the U.S. House of Representatives; to the Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr., Secretary of the Interior; to
16 Barry Williamson, Director of the Minerals Management Service; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and
17 the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative,
18 members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.