

STATE OF ALASKA

THE LEGISLATURE

1986

Source

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**Legislative
Resolve No.**

37



Relating to the United States and Soviet Union boundary dispute and the resources in the area under dispute.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS discussions have been conducted between the U.S. Department of State and the Soviet Government over this issue since 1981, with the latest round being held in Moscow on July 23

and 24, 1984, with the American delegation led by Davis R. Robinson, the Legal Adviser of the U.S. Department of State; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS during the announcement of the Navarin Basin's April 1984 sale, the U.S. Department of the Interior revealed that the Soviet Union was demanding part of the Outer Continental Shelf in the Navarin Basin and that the U.S. Department of State was requiring that the proposed oil and gas lease sales in the area claimed by the Soviet Government be held in abeyance, that is, the bids received and retained but the leases not awarded until the matter is resolved; and

WHEREAS the Federal Register announcement described the dispute as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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