

STATE OF ALASKA

THE LEGISLATURE

1991

Source

HCS SJR 15(STA)

Legislative Resolve No.

8



Opposing the proposed reduction in the cost-of-living allowance for federal employees in Alaska.

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

WHEREAS the federal Office of Personnel Management commissioned a study that found that the cost of living in some parts of Alaska is now equal to the cost of living in Washington, D.C., which is the base for deciding eligibility for cost-of-living allowances in the federal government; and

WHEREAS approximately 13,000 federal employees are employed in Alaska, approximately 9,000 of whom receive a cost-of-living allowance; and

WHEREAS the Office of Personnel Management is considering, based on the study, eliminating the cost-of-living allowance for federal workers in Anchorage and Fairbanks and reducing the allowance severely for federal workers living in Juneau; and

WHEREAS the reduction or elimination of the cost-of-living allowance will result in a considerable economic hardship on federal employees in Alaska; and

WHEREAS medical and dental facilities and services are more readily available and more easily accessible to residents of Washington, D.C., typically at a lower cost than comparable services are available in Alaska, and many residents of Alaska must leave their towns

and villages, and in many cases, even the state, to obtain medical care; and

WHEREAS the elimination or reduction of the cost-of-living allowance may have a significant effect on the ability and willingness of current federal workers in the state to remain in federal service in the state; and

WHEREAS the elimination or reduction will affect the ability of the federal government to attract new federal employees to positions in the state; and

WHEREAS many federal employees in Alaska have relied on the cost-of-living allowance in making financial commitments, including purchasing their homes, and a reduction in the allowance would have a devastating effect on their ability to continue to make housing payments; and

WHEREAS prior cost-of-living surveys have always utilized personal interviews of federal employees as a means of gathering data, but this study did not include direct employee interviews; and

WHEREAS the cost of living in Alaska is higher than the average cost of living in the nation, Alaska's climate is much colder for longer periods than the climate in Washington, D.C., resulting in Alaskans having to pay higher home heating costs, Alaskans pay a higher cost for gasoline and other motor fuels than do residents of Washington, D.C., and Alaskans pay a higher cost for airline travel within the state and from the state to other world destinations; and

WHEREAS these costs are not adequately addressed in the cost-of-living study prepared for the Office of Personnel Management;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the Office of Personnel Management to conduct another cost-of-living study for federal employees in the state, which

(1) factors in the higher costs for energy, medical care and services, and transportation; and

(2) uses direct personal interviews of federal workers in the state as part of its methodology; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the Congress of the United States to adequately provide for the cost-of-living allowance for Alaska's federal employees in the federal budget and to consider enacting legislation to establish entitlement to cost-of-living allowances by comparison with the average cost of living in the

nation rather than in Washington, D.C.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Constance B. Newman, Director, Office of Personnel Management; the Honorable Dan Quayle, Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable George Mitchell, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Thomas S. Foley, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; 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.