

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 11
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

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Introduced: 3/25/15

Referred: Resources, Finance

A RESOLUTION

1 **Encouraging the governor to convene a Climate Change Task Force.**

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

3 **WHEREAS** the state and residents of the state are threatened by the especially
4 accelerated rate of climate change in the state; and

5 **WHEREAS** climate change affects the transportation and industrial infrastructure,
6 fiscal security, resource-based industries, and cultural identity of the state; and

7 **WHEREAS**, although carbon dioxide emissions come from a variety of natural
8 sources, human-related emissions are responsible for the rapid increase in carbon dioxide in
9 the atmosphere that has occurred since the Industrial Revolution; and

10 **WHEREAS** the rate of warming in the state has been twice the national average over
11 the past 50 years, and the average annual temperatures in the state are projected to increase an
12 additional 3.5 to seven degrees Fahrenheit by the middle of the century; and

13 **WHEREAS**, over the past 50 years, temperatures across the state have increased by
14 an average of 3.4 degrees Fahrenheit, with winter warming rising by an average of 6.3
15 degrees Fahrenheit; and

16 **WHEREAS** the state is the only Arctic region in the nation; and

1 **WHEREAS** experts recently predicted that the Arctic Ocean will have ice-free
2 summers within a generation; and

3 **WHEREAS** a dependable transportation infrastructure is essential to maintaining
4 public safety and commerce; and

5 **WHEREAS** the existing transportation and industrial infrastructure, including ports,
6 railroads, roads, highways, bridges, airports, sewage systems, and water supplies of the state,
7 will be degraded by diminishing permafrost, coastal erosion, more frequent wildfires, and
8 rising sea levels; and

9 **WHEREAS** three-fourths of the Trans Alaska Pipeline extends across land underlain
10 with permafrost, and the pipeline is, therefore, affected by rapid permafrost melting rates; and

11 **WHEREAS** the season and utility of ice roads for winter construction on the North
12 Slope has shortened from 200 to 100 days since the 1970s because of rising temperatures and,
13 subsequently, has shortened the work period on the North Slope; and

14 **WHEREAS** the costs of climate change threaten the fiscal security of the state; and

15 **WHEREAS** the uneven sinking of the ground in response to permafrost thaw is
16 estimated to add between \$3,600,000,000 and \$6,100,000,000 to the current costs of
17 maintaining public infrastructure over the next 20 years; and

18 **WHEREAS** the United States Government Accountability Office reported that most
19 Alaska Native villages have already been affected by flooding and erosion; and

20 **WHEREAS**, of 31 villages identified by the United States Government
21 Accountability Office as being eminently threatened by coastal erosion, at least 12 have
22 decided to relocate in part or entirely; and

23 **WHEREAS** the costs of the relocation of the villages of Shishmaref and Kivalina,
24 which was forced by climate-change-related coastal erosion, winter storms, and rising sea
25 levels, could exceed \$170,000,000 for Shishmaref and \$400,000,000 for Kivalina; and

26 **WHEREAS** the coastal water of the state is becoming more acidic because of
27 increased carbon emissions, and that ocean acidification is disrupting the growth of skeletons
28 and shells of many marine species important to Alaska fisheries and Alaskans; and

29 **WHEREAS** the seafood industry of the state, which generates more than
30 \$5,000,000,000 in annual revenue and is the number one private employer in the state, is at
31 risk because of the harmful effects of ocean acidification; and

1 **WHEREAS** approximately 120,000 Alaskans rely on subsistence fisheries for most, if
2 not all, of their dietary protein; and

3 **WHEREAS** the increasingly active wildfire season in the state is associated with
4 longer snow free seasons, changes in vegetation, and loss of ice and permafrost; and

5 **WHEREAS** the Alaska way of life is dependent on hunting, fishing, and subsistence
6 resources; and

7 **WHEREAS** climate change is negatively affecting the accessibility to state residents
8 of, migratory patterns of, and distribution of fish and game; and

9 **WHEREAS** many residents and visitors choose this state as a home or vacation
10 destination because of winter recreational activities, which are increasingly difficult to
11 practice; and

12 **WHEREAS** even the iconic Alaska event, the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, has been
13 relocated because of a lack of snow necessary to complete the race along its normal route; and

14 **WHEREAS** each resident of the state has an inalienable human right to dependable
15 food sources and safe infrastructure; and

16 **WHEREAS** government leadership is needed to achieve significant reductions in
17 greenhouse gas emissions and increases in energy efficiency; and

18 **WHEREAS** the legislature, industry, and all state residents have a responsibility to
19 the next generation and future generations to minimize actions that accelerate climate change
20 and to allow for current and future generations to continue enjoying the Alaska way of life;
21 and

22 **WHEREAS** residents of the state should have a strong voice in actions taken by the
23 state and federal government related to climate change--a voice that can be built on the
24 Climate Change Sub-Cabinet findings introduced by former Governor Sarah Palin; and

25 **WHEREAS** the state should have a presence at all national and international climate
26 change proceedings, including the Arctic Council, the United States National Climate
27 Assessment team, and the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference;

28 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature encourages the governor to
29 convene a Climate Change Task Force with a diverse membership that represents the interests
30 of state residents.