

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 17

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON

Introduced: 2/12/14

Referred:

A RESOLUTION

1 **Requesting the Governor to enter into good-faith negotiations with the United States**
2 **Secretary of the Interior to secure a permanent wildlife buffer conservation easement**
3 **east of Denali National Park and Preserve, the creation of which may include the**
4 **exchange of a state conservation easement in return for a transfer from the federal**
5 **government of equal value in the form of an easement, other federal land, other interests**
6 **in federal land, or compensation; and requesting the Governor to report the status of**
7 **the negotiations to the public by July 1, 2014.**

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

9 **WHEREAS** Denali National Park and Preserve is a valuable tourism asset in the state,
10 with over 400,000 visitors a year, including many Alaskans, contributing over \$140,000,000
11 annually to the economy of the state; and

12 **WHEREAS** wildlife viewing is one of the principal reasons visitors come to Denali;
13 and

14 **WHEREAS** the National Park Service recently has reported that visitor viewings of

1 one of the park's iconic watchable wildlife species, the wolf, has declined dramatically in
2 recent years, from 44 percent in 2010, to 21 percent in 2011, to 12 percent in 2012, to just
3 four percent in 2013; and

4 **WHEREAS** the decline in successful viewing of wolves denies tens of thousands of
5 paying visitors, including many Alaskans, the opportunity to view wolves in a wild subarctic
6 ecosystem, reduces the value of the visitor experience, and creates negative economic
7 consequences; and

8 **WHEREAS** the taking of wolves normally present in Denali National Park and
9 Preserve when they cross the eastern boundary of the park onto state land contributes to the
10 decline in the viewing of wolves in the park; and

11 **WHEREAS** Denali National Park and Preserve had a reputation similar to that of
12 Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming as one of the best places in the world to view wolves
13 in the wild, and that reputation had been a strong draw for visitors to the park; the decline in
14 wolf viewings has significantly eroded that reputation; and

15 **WHEREAS** between 2000 and 2010, the state sought to protect this important
16 economic resource by establishing a small no-take buffer east of the park, but the Board of
17 Game terminated the buffer in 2010; and

18 **WHEREAS** reestablishment of a no-take buffer of sufficient size will help reverse the
19 decline in the viewing of wolves in Denali National Park and Preserve and will help sustain
20 and increase the visitor economy in Denali National Park and Preserve; and

21 **WHEREAS** sustaining and increasing wildlife viewing opportunity in Denali
22 National Park and Preserve is in the state's long-term economic interest;

23 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the
24 Governor to enter into good-faith negotiations with the United States Secretary of the Interior
25 to secure a permanent wildlife buffer conservation easement east of Denali National Park and
26 Preserve, the creation of which may include the exchange of a state conservation easement in
27 return for a transfer from the federal government of equal value in the form of an easement,
28 other federal land, other interests in federal land, or compensation; and be it

29 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the
30 Governor to report the status of the negotiations to the public by July 1, 2014.