

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVE TARR

Introduced: 4/16/21

Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the Governor to establish the Office of Outdoor Equity.**

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

3 **WHEREAS** it is widely recognized that outdoor recreation promotes physical and
4 mental health and well-being; and

5 **WHEREAS** outdoor recreational activities are associated with social benefits,
6 including intrapersonal and interpersonal development, active citizenship, environmental
7 awareness, increased cognitive function in children, and crime reduction; and

8 **WHEREAS**, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor recreation has
9 become increasingly popular, as one of the safer ways to get exercise; and

10 **WHEREAS** outdoor recreation areas in the state employed many financially impacted
11 Alaskans during the COVID-19 pandemic and have the potential to continue to provide
12 financial security for unemployed Alaskans moving forward; and

13 **WHEREAS**, even though the population of the United States is becoming
14 increasingly diverse, evidence shows that many minorities do not enjoy equal opportunities to
15 get outdoors and recreate, as illustrated by one study that found minorities to be
16 underrepresented among visitors to the national forests; and

1 **WHEREAS**, when asked in quantitative studies, ethnic minorities disproportionately
2 cite time, money, personal safety, language, and transportation as barriers to participating in
3 outdoor recreation; and

4 **WHEREAS** evidence indicates that one of the major contributors to ethno-racial
5 disparities in outdoor recreation is a lack of access to culturally relevant information; and

6 **WHEREAS**, because outdoor recreation can be costly, low-income families often
7 cannot afford to visit the state's parks, trails, beaches, ski hills, and public use cabins; and

8 **WHEREAS**, in 2019, California and New Mexico passed legislation to help fund
9 outdoor recreational opportunities for individuals and communities that face barriers to
10 getting outside and recreating; and

11 **WHEREAS** Wyoming and Montana have established free hunting mentorship
12 programs to make recreational and subsistence hunting more accessible to new hunters; and

13 **WHEREAS**, in 2019, Congress passed the Every Kid Outdoors Act, which provides
14 fourth-grade children and their families free access to public land and waterways; and

15 **WHEREAS** widespread support currently exists across the country for expanding
16 access to outdoor recreation, with at least 15 bills pending in state legislatures that would
17 increase outdoor education opportunities for youth; and

18 **WHEREAS**, in January 2021, the United States Department of the Interior
19 exacerbated inequities in outdoor access by defunding the Outdoor Recreation Legacy
20 Partnership (ORLP) program, which provided grant funding for outdoor recreation in low-
21 income communities; and

22 **WHEREAS** many of the public land, waterway, and recreation areas in the state and
23 around the country continue to bear colonial place names and monuments that replaced
24 Indigenous place names that were used since time immemorial; and

25 **WHEREAS** many local governments in the state support efforts by Secretary of the
26 Interior Deb Haaland to reinstate Indigenous place names as a matter of historical equity and
27 acknowledgment of Indigenous stewardship; and

28 **WHEREAS** cases have been documented of hate symbols appearing and
29 discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities occurring in public parks and outdoor
30 recreation areas around the country; and

31 **WHEREAS**, because everyone deserves an opportunity to recreate in the state's great

1 outdoors, the state has a responsibility to work with existing organizations to get people from
2 all walks of life into the woods, out on the trails, onto the beaches, and out on the water; and

3 **WHEREAS** many organizations in the state offer discounts, scholarships, and other
4 support to make it possible for low-income students and families to participate in outdoor
5 recreation programs, these resources and programs alone cannot meet the demand for
6 equitable access to the state's outdoor resources;

7 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports the right of all
8 Alaskans to have access to the outdoors, for health, wellness, spiritual, and subsistence
9 reasons; and be it

10 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the legislature urges the Governor to establish the
11 Office of Outdoor Equity in the Department of Natural Resources; and be it

12 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the legislature requests the Governor to make funds
13 available for the Office of Outdoor Equity to distribute as grants to organizations in the state
14 that are working to improve equitable access to the state's outdoor resources, especially in
15 communities that have historically been excluded from outdoor recreation and subsistence
16 activities.