

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 15

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY SENATORS OLSON, McGuire, Giessel, Dyson, Huggins, Wagoner, Wielechowski, Meyer, Menard, Egan, Davis, Thomas, Stedman, Stevens

Introduced: 2/3/12

Referred: State Affairs

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the United States Congress to fund all the facilities and vessels necessary for the**
2 **United States Coast Guard to fulfill its Arctic missions, including icebreakers and an**
3 **Arctic Coast Guard base.**

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

5 **WHEREAS** the purchase of Alaska in 1867 made America an Arctic nation; and

6 **WHEREAS** Alaska was admitted to statehood in 1959, on equal footing with the
7 previously admitted states; and

8 **WHEREAS** Alaska deserves full recognition and assistance from the federal
9 government like any other state; and

10 **WHEREAS** Art. IV, sec. 4, of the Constitution of the United States, requires the
11 United States to protect each of the states against invasion and does not specify a preference
12 for protection of one state over any other; and

13 **WHEREAS** the United States Arctic Region Policy revised in 2009 calls for the
14 protection of commerce, the protection of the environment, and improved safety, security, and
15 reliability of transportation in the Arctic region; and

1 **WHEREAS** ice cover in the Arctic is at historic lows, and multiyear ice is decreasing;
2 and

3 **WHEREAS** the entire Arctic region, including the Arctic region of the United States,
4 is experiencing increased human activity related to shipping, oil and gas development,
5 commercial fishing, and tourism; and

6 **WHEREAS** the increased activity in the Arctic underscores a commensurate need for
7 immediate investment in the Arctic region of the United States to enable the responsible
8 development of resources, foster maritime commerce, safeguard the well-being of Arctic
9 residents and ecosystems, facilitate emergency and disaster preparedness and response, and
10 protect United States sovereignty; and

11 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Northern Waters Task Force, established in 2010,
12 recommends that the Alaska State Legislature encourage the federal government to establish a
13 United States Coast Guard base in the Arctic and to fund the construction of additional
14 icebreakers and ice-capable vessels for the United States fleet; and

15 **WHEREAS**, as Northern sea routes open and foreign shippers set their sights on
16 Asian markets, international shipping of oil and gas and other potentially hazardous cargo
17 through the Bering Strait is rapidly increasing; and

18 **WHEREAS** the United States and its trading partners could reap economic benefits
19 from accessing Northern sea routes with the help of modern, fully equipped icebreakers; and

20 **WHEREAS** the United States Coast Guard has 11 statutory missions, including
21 search and rescue, marine safety, ports, waterways, and coastal security, drug interdiction,
22 migrant interdiction, defense readiness, living marine resources, marine environmental
23 protection, aids to navigation, ice operations, and other law enforcement; and

24 **WHEREAS** the United States Coast Guard's missions relate to protecting the public,
25 the environment, and United States economic interests in the nation's ports and waterways,
26 along the coast, on international waters, and in any maritime region, as required for national
27 security; and

28 **WHEREAS** the National Contingency Plan further requires the United States Coast
29 Guard to oversee oil spill planning and preparedness in coastal waters and to supervise oil
30 spill response; and

31 **WHEREAS** the United States Congress and the Administration are mandated by

1 numerous laws and policies to maintain icebreaking operations; and

2 **WHEREAS** those mandates include President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1936
3 Executive Order 7521, which requires the United States Coast Guard to keep channels and
4 harbors open to navigation by means of icebreaking operations; the Arctic Research Policy
5 Act of 1984, which directs the United States Office of Management and Budget to build and
6 deploy icebreakers and allocate funds necessary to support icebreaking operations; the Coast
7 Guard Authorization Act of 2010, which requires the United States Coast Guard to promote
8 safe maritime navigation by means of icebreaking where necessary, feasible, and effective;
9 and the 2011 Unified Command Plan, which sets new boundaries and responsibilities for the
10 United States combatant commands, and directed the United States Northern Command to
11 take the lead in advocating for new resources in the Arctic; and

12 **WHEREAS** the binding Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement signed by the eight
13 Arctic nations at the Arctic Council in May 2011 commits the United States to search and
14 rescue response within the Arctic sector of the United States, including waters north of
15 Alaska, Bristol Bay, and the Bering Sea; and

16 **WHEREAS** the promise to provide search and rescue operations in the Arctic sector
17 of the United States is compromised without sufficient icebreakers and other United States
18 Coast Guard assets; and

19 **WHEREAS** the January 2012 delivery of fuel to Nome, Alaska, by the Russian fuel
20 tanker Renda, escorted by the United States Coast Guard's only polar class icebreaker, Healy,
21 emphasized the need for increased United States icebreaker presence in the Arctic; and

22 **WHEREAS**, at present, the United States has only one polar class icebreaker in
23 service, the United States Coast Guard Cutter Healy, a vessel designed for scientific research
24 and response operations; and

25 **WHEREAS** a second polar class icebreaker, the United States Coast Guard Cutter
26 Polar Star, is undergoing extensive repairs in Seattle, Washington, and is scheduled to return
27 to service in 2013, at which time it is predicted it should function effectively for only another
28 seven to 10 years; and

29 **WHEREAS** the United States Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star's sister ship, the United
30 States Coast Guard Cutter Polar Sea, was taken out of service in 2011; and

31 **WHEREAS** Russia has a fleet of eight nuclear-powered icebreakers; China has one

1 large icebreaking research ship supporting science in both polar regions and is building a
2 second, smaller but more powerful icebreaking research ship that is scheduled to be ready in
3 2013; Canada has committed \$38,000,000,000 to a 30-year plan to build additional
4 icebreakers and other ice-strengthened ships; and Sweden, Finland, South Korea, and Japan
5 have added icebreakers to their fleets; and

6 **WHEREAS** the United States Coast Guard estimates that designing and constructing
7 a new polar class ice breaker will take seven to 10 years; and

8 **WHEREAS** having a sufficient number of ice-capable vessels, including shallow-
9 draft vessels with icebreaking capability, is vital for the United States Coast Guard to fulfill
10 its expanding mission in the Arctic; and

11 **WHEREAS** the United States Coast Guard has very limited Arctic emergency
12 response capabilities and no permanent bases near the Bering Strait chokepoint or on Alaska's
13 North Slope to support the United States Coast Guard operations; and

14 **WHEREAS** the most northern United States Coast Guard base in the United States in
15 Kodiak, Alaska, is more than 1,000 miles from possible Chukchi Sea drilling sites and nearly
16 as far from existing Arctic shipping lanes in the Bering Strait, and that distance causes
17 untenable logistical problems that negatively affect response times and capabilities; and

18 **WHEREAS** the United States Coast Guard should have a greater overall presence in
19 the Arctic, with the ability to stage assets closer to future shipping, oil and gas drilling, and
20 commercial fishing activities;

21 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States
22 Congress and the Administration to fund all facilities and vessels necessary to enable the
23 United States Coast Guard to fulfill its Arctic missions, including icebreakers and an Arctic
24 Coast Guard base; and be it

25 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States
26 Congress and the Administration to consider all options to finance icebreakers, including
27 charging for icebreaker escorts, the option to lease rather than own the icebreakers needed in
28 the Arctic, and selling our aging icebreakers to the private sector for refurbishment.

29 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of
30 the United States; the Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, United States Secretary of State;
31 the Honorable Admiral Robert J. Papp, Commandant, United States Coast Guard;

1 Ambassador David A. Balton, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries, United
2 States Department of State; Rear Admiral Thomas F. Ostebo, Commander, United States
3 Seventeenth Coast Guard District; Gustaf Lind, Chair, Arctic Council, Senior Arctic Officials,
4 and Senior Arctic Official of Sweden; Julia L. Gourley, Arctic Council, Senior Arctic Official
5 of the United States; Sheila Riordon, Arctic Council, Senior Arctic Official of Canada; Nauja
6 Bianco, Arctic Council, Senior Arctic Official of Denmark, Greenland, and Faroe Islands;
7 Hannu Halinen, Arctic Council, Senior Arctic Official of Finland; Hjalmar W. Hannesson,
8 Arctic Council, Senior Arctic Official of Iceland; Karsten Klepshvik, Arctic Council, Senior
9 Arctic Official of Norway; Anton Vasiliev, Arctic Council, Senior Arctic Official of the
10 Russian Federation; the Honorable Sean Parnell, Governor of Alaska; the Honorable Mead
11 Treadwell, Lieutenant Governor of Alaska; the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable
12 Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of
13 the Alaska delegation in Congress; and all other members of the 112th United States
14 Congress.