

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1229

To amend the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 to establish
a United States Ambassador at Large for Arctic Affairs.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 16, 2011

Mr. BEGICH introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred
to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To amend the State Department Basic Authorities Act of
1956 to establish a United States Ambassador at Large
for Arctic Affairs.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “United States Amba-
5 sador at Large for Arctic Affairs Act of 2011”.

6 **SEC. 2. UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR ARC-**
7 **TIC AFFAIRS.**

8 Title I of the State Department Basic Authorities Act
9 of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2651a et seq.) is amended by adding
10 at the end the following:

1 **“SEC. 63. UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR**
2 **ARCTIC AFFAIRS.**

3 “(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

4 “(1) the United States is an Arctic nation
5 with—

6 “(A) an approximately 700-mile border on
7 the Arctic Ocean;

8 “(B) more than 100,000,000 acres of land
9 above the Arctic Circle; and

10 “(C) an even broader area defined as Arctic
11 by temperature that includes the Bering Sea
12 and Aleutian Islands;

13 “(2) the Arctic region of the United States—

14 “(A) is known to the indigenous population
15 as Inuvikput, or the ‘place where we live’;

16 “(B) is home to an indigenous population
17 that has subsisted for millennia on the abun-
18 dance of marine mammals, fish, and wildlife,
19 many species of which are unique to the Arctic
20 region;

21 “(C) has produced more than
22 16,000,000,000 barrels of oil, and, according to
23 the United States Geological Service, holds
24 30,000,000,000 barrels of oil and 220 trillion
25 cubic feet of natural gas, making the region

1 fundamentally important to the interest of the
2 United States;

3 “(3) since 1959, temperatures in the Arctic re-
4 gion of the United States have warmed by 3 to 4 de-
5 grees Celsius, a rate of increase more than twice the
6 global average;

7 “(4) the Arctic ice pack is rapidly diminishing
8 and thinning, and the National Oceanic and Atmos-
9 pheric Administration estimates the Arctic Ocean
10 may be ice free during the summer months in as few
11 as 30 years;

12 “(5) these changes are having a significant im-
13 pact on the communities and ecosystems of the in-
14 digenous people of the Arctic, and the marine mam-
15 mals, fish, and wildlife upon which the indigenous
16 population depends;

17 “(6) these changes are opening new portions of
18 the Arctic continental shelf of the United States to
19 possible development for offshore oil and gas, com-
20 mercial fishing, marine shipping, and tourism;

21 “(7) increased industrial development and com-
22 mercial activity in the Arctic region requires a
23 heightened diplomatic presence to address important
24 issues that involve the United States and Pan-Arctic
25 countries or the Arctic Council;

1 “(8) the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental
2 forum established in 1996, includes representatives
3 from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway,
4 the Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United
5 States and 6 Permanent Participants who represent
6 the indigenous peoples of the Arctic;

7 “(9) the Arctic Council—

8 “(A) is committed to the well-being of the
9 people who live in the Arctic region;

10 “(B) recognizes the special relationship in-
11 digenous people have with the Arctic region;

12 “(C) acknowledges the unique contribu-
13 tions indigenous communities make to the Arc-
14 tic region;

15 “(D) is committed to sustainable economic
16 and social development in the Arctic region, im-
17 proving health conditions in the Arctic region,
18 and fostering cultural well-being in the Arctic
19 region; and

20 “(E) is committed to protecting the Arctic
21 environment, including Arctic ecosystems, bio-
22 diversity in the Arctic region, and the conserva-
23 tion and sustainable use of Arctic natural re-
24 sources;

1 “(10) other Arctic countries are pursuing
2 claims for Arctic seabed resources under the United
3 Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, signed
4 at Montego Bay, Jamaica, December 10, 1982;

5 “(11) the North Pacific Fishery Management
6 Council recommends closing commercial fishing op-
7 erations in the Arctic waters of the United States
8 until sustainable fishing is scientifically determined,
9 an action that will only be effective with cooperation
10 from neighboring Arctic countries;

11 “(12) increased commercial activity in the Ar-
12 tic region raises concerns regarding national secu-
13 rity, environmental protection, and the cultural and
14 subsistence needs of indigenous communities;

15 “(13) the United States seeks to maintain, and
16 further develop, a constructive and cordial relation-
17 ship with the members of the Arctic Council; and

18 “(14) the United States has not established an
19 Ambassador at Large for Arctic Affairs, who would
20 enhance the ability of the United States to respond
21 quickly and appropriately to issues of mutual inter-
22 est to the Arctic Council and Arctic countries gen-
23 erally.

24 “(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within
25 the Department of State an Ambassador at Large for Arc-

1 tie Affairs (referred to in this section as the ‘Ambas-
2 sador’), appointed under subsection (c).

3 “(c) APPOINTMENT.—The Ambassador shall be ap-
4 pointed by the President, by and with the advice and con-
5 sent of the Senate.

6 “(d) DUTIES.—

7 “(1) DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION.—Subject
8 to the direction of the President and the Secretary
9 of State, the Ambassador is authorized to represent
10 the United States in matters and cases relevant to
11 Arctic affairs in—

12 “(A) contacts with foreign governments,
13 intergovernmental organizations, and special-
14 ized agencies of the United Nations, the Arctic
15 Council, and other international organizations
16 of which the United States is a member; and

17 “(B) multilateral conferences and meetings
18 relating to Arctic affairs.

19 “(2) ADVISORY ROLE.—The Ambassador shall
20 be a principal adviser to the President and the Sec-
21 retary of State regarding matters affecting Arctic
22 affairs and shall make recommendations regarding
23 the policies of the United States relating to Arctic
24 affairs.

1 “(e) FUNDING.—The Secretary of State shall provide
2 the Ambassador with such funds as may be necessary to
3 carry out the duties described in subsection (d).”.

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