

**STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE**

2012

Source

SCS HJR 29(RES) am S

**Legislative
Resolve No.**

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Urging the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, to plug legacy wells properly and to reclaim the legacy well sites as soon as possible in order to protect the environment in the Arctic region; and requesting the Office of the Governor to increase nationwide awareness about legacy wells and well sites.

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

WHEREAS the United States Navy and the United States Geological Survey drilled approximately 137 wells on federal land in northern Alaska between 1944 and 1981, all of which are now abandoned; and

WHEREAS the United States Bureau of Land Management is the current operator of the abandoned wells, now referred to as legacy wells; and

WHEREAS only seven of the legacy wells have been properly plugged and reclaimed; and

WHEREAS the remaining legacy wells are out of compliance with the regulations adopted by the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, and 42 of the remaining legacy wells are flagrantly out of compliance; and

WHEREAS three of the legacy wells can no longer be found; and

WHEREAS the changing geography of the Arctic puts additional legacy wells at risk of being lost before remediation can occur; and

WHEREAS the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission has repeatedly reminded the federal government of the obligation to plug legacy wells properly and to reclaim legacy well sites; and

WHEREAS the legacy wells that have not been properly plugged and reclaimed pose a significant risk to surface vegetation, groundwater, fish, land mammals, and sea mammals; and

WHEREAS wood and metal debris and deteriorating buildings at the sites of the legacy wells litter the landscape and detract from the natural beauty of the Arctic region; and

WHEREAS the federal government has received \$9,480,946,486 from lease sales in the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska and the outer continental shelf of the state and should use a portion of those funds to plug and reclaim legacy wells in the state; and

WHEREAS the state cannot impose fines on the federal government for violating the regulations of the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, but if it could do so, the fines would exceed \$8,000,000,000; if the statute of limitations were disregarded, the fines would exceed \$40,000,000,000; and

WHEREAS both state and federal regulations require the plugging and reclamation of legacy wells, and the federal government would not allow a private entity to remain in violation of those regulations;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, to plug legacy wells properly and to reclaim the legacy well sites as soon as possible in order to protect the environment in the Arctic region; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the Office of the Governor to disseminate information through appropriate national news outlets and by other available means to increase awareness nationwide of the dangerous conditions of the legacy wells and legacy well sites in the state and the federal government's failure to plug the legacy wells properly and reclaim the legacy well sites.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of

the United States; the Honorable Ken Salazar, United States Secretary of the Interior; the Honorable Robert V. Abbey, Director, United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.