

**STATE OF ALASKA  
THE LEGISLATURE**

**2012**

**Source**

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**Legislative  
Resolve No.**

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

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

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

**WHEREAS** Alaska was admitted to statehood in 1959; and

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

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

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

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

and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**WHEREAS** the United States Congress and the Administration are mandated by numerous laws and policies to maintain icebreaking operations; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**WHEREAS** Russia has a fleet of eight nuclear-powered icebreakers; China has one large icebreaking research ship supporting science in both polar regions and is building a

second, smaller but more powerful icebreaking research ship that is scheduled to be ready in 2013; Canada has committed \$38,000,000,000 to a 30-year plan to build additional icebreakers and other ice-strengthened ships; and Sweden, Finland, South Korea, and Japan have added icebreakers to their fleets; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States Congress and the Administration to consider all options to finance the refurbishment of our current polar class icebreakers, the acquisition of new icebreakers, and the long-term maintenance funding of the United States Coast Guard icebreaker fleet and Arctic facilities.

**COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States; the Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, United States Secretary of State; the Honorable Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian

Federation; the Honorable Erkki Tuomioja, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland; the Honorable Carl Bildt, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden; the Honorable Jonas Gahr Støre, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway; the Honorable John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada; the Honorable Össur Skarphéðinsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland; the Honorable Villy Søvndal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark; Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr., Commandant, United States Coast Guard; Ambassador David A. Balton, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries, United States Department of State; Rear Admiral Thomas P. Ostebo, Commander, United States Seventeenth Coast Guard District; the Honorable Sean Parnell, Governor of Alaska; the Honorable Mead Treadwell, Lieutenant Governor of Alaska; 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; and all other members of the 112th United States Congress.