

ALASKA CLIMATE RESOLUTION

SENATE CS FOR CS FOR HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 30(FIN)
Creating an Alaska Climate Impact Assessment Commission

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

WHEREAS recent weather patterns have created warming trends that have jeopardized the health and well-being of residents of communities and the natural resources on which they rely; and

WHEREAS flooding and erosion negatively affect coastal and river communities in both rural and urban areas of the state; and

WHEREAS coastal communities are negatively affected by flooding and erosion because of delayed formation of protective shore ice in the fall; and

WHEREAS communities along riverbanks or in river deltas are more susceptible to flooding and erosion caused by ice jams, snow and glacial melts, rising sea levels, changing river patterns, and heavier rainfall; and

WHEREAS permafrost is found beneath approximately 80 percent of the state; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, there has been widespread thawing of permafrost in some areas, causing land to slump and erode, which in turn has caused serious damage to roads, buildings, and other infrastructure; and

WHEREAS the thawing of the permafrost is likely to continue, which will have a continuing negative effect on future structures and development; and

WHEREAS fish and wildlife habitats are changing, affecting the accessibility and viability of certain species; and

WHEREAS resource development and the revenue it generates are potentially negatively affected by the effects of climate change; and

WHEREAS the rapidly retreating sea ice affects polar route navigation and has raised security concerns; and

WHEREAS the state has only one employee working on these issues; and

WHEREAS, although the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment provides the necessary scientific foundation to assess current effects of climate change in the Arctic, it does not address the economic effects of climate change on the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS a comprehensive plan to address these issues, prevent or mitigate negative effects of climate change, and address economic effects on the state will help save lives, protect public health, preserve economic and resource development, and protect valuable infrastructure;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that there is created an Alaska Climate Impact Assessment Commission; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall consist of 11 members as follows:

1. two senators appointed by the president of the senate;
2. two representatives appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; and

3. seven public members appointed jointly by the president of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives consisting of
 - a. one member with expertise in climatology or knowledgeable in the area of oceanography;
 - b. one member who is knowledgeable about Alaska's economy;
 - c. one member who is knowledgeable in the area of land management or restoration of wildlife and natural resources;
 - d. one member experienced in arctic and sub-arctic engineering requirements for public highway and facility construction and maintenance;
 - e. a recognized local expert representing affected Alaska communities;
 - f. one member who represents affected resource development industries;
 - g. one member who represents the affected tourism industries; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall select a chairperson from among members of the legislature; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the public members of the commission may receive compensation for per diem or reimbursement for travel or other expenses incurred in serving on the commission; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission may meet during and between legislative sessions; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the House and Senate Resources Committees may assign committee staff to provide support services for the commission; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the duties of the commission include the following:

1. assess the current and potential effects of climate warming trends on the citizens, natural resources, public health, and economy of the state, in particular the adverse effects on natural resource development, forest safety, fish and game utilization, transportation, community, and resource development infrastructures;
2. estimate costs to the state and its citizens of adverse effects associated with climate change;
3. identify specific circumstances of flooding and erosion that have affected life, property, and economic and resource development in the state;
4. examine alternative measures to prevent and mitigate the effects of flooding and erosion;
5. develop policies to guide infrastructure investments in Alaska villages, cities, and boroughs that are most affected by flooding and erosion;
6. recommend land use regulations, including area standards for designation of land prone to flooding and erosion;
7. investigate and assess issues involving permafrost and damage caused by permafrost;
8. recommend policies to decrease the negative effects of climate change; and
9. identify and coordinate efforts of mutual concern with federal, state, and local agencies; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall offer recommendations and provide possible solutions and preventative measures that can be implemented by Alaska communities and by the state and federal governments; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall conduct eight hearings throughout the state to fulfill its purpose; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall deliver a preliminary report of its findings to the legislature on March 1, 2007, and make a final report to the legislature on January 10, 2008, together with legislative proposals for consideration; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall be available for legislative hearing on its final report and recommendations; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the continuation or termination of the commission shall be reevaluated at the Second Regular Session of the Twenty-Fifth Alaska State Legislature.