

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 12

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON

Introduced: 5/14/19

Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Establishing a House Special Committee on Climate Change.**

2 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:**

3 **WHEREAS** Earth's climate is transforming more rapidly now than at any previous
4 point in the history of modern civilization; and

5 **WHEREAS** climate change is already causing widespread and well-documented
6 adverse ecological, social, and economic effects worldwide, and these adverse effects will
7 become more severe as the climate continues to change; and

8 **WHEREAS** sea ice extents in the Bering Sea, Chukchi Sea, and Arctic Ocean are at
9 all-time lows, threatening the marine mammal populations that rely on the ice as habitat and
10 the subsistence way of life of indigenous peoples who hunt those animals; and

11 **WHEREAS** lower sea ice extent leads to Arctic amplification, causing the Arctic
12 region of the state to warm at a significantly higher rate compared to the rest of the planet, and
13 a warmer, ice-free Arctic Ocean exacerbates extreme weather events globally; and

14 **WHEREAS** an ice-free Arctic comes with significant economic and practical
15 implications for shipping, resource development, and tourism that must be actively addressed
16 by the state; and

1 **WHEREAS** many communities in western Alaska are experiencing drastic erosion
2 problems caused by thawing permafrost and more frequent winter storms, and some
3 communities have already been forced to relocate; and

4 **WHEREAS** melting permafrost poses significant infrastructure challenges across the
5 state and jeopardizes access to resource development projects in remote regions of the state;
6 and

7 **WHEREAS** the state's glaciers are retreating rapidly, losing a cumulative
8 75,000,000,000 tons of ice annually and contributing appreciably to the rise of the global sea
9 level; and

10 **WHEREAS** increased glacial runoff causes changes in the temperature, salinity, and
11 sediment levels of rivers and streams, and it is unknown how these changes affect the
12 anadromous fish populations, including salmon populations, on which residents of the state
13 rely for commercial and subsistence harvests; and

14 **WHEREAS** an increase in ocean temperatures causes ocean acidification, potentially
15 affecting mollusk and shellfish populations and the related fisheries; and

16 **WHEREAS** an increase in atmospheric and ocean temperatures creates uncertainty
17 for the survival of native species in the state, including fish populations statewide, and
18 threatens the livelihoods of many commercial fishermen; and

19 **WHEREAS** an increase in atmospheric and ocean temperatures is leading to an
20 increased prevalence of invasive species in the state, disrupting the state's fragile ecosystem;
21 and

22 **WHEREAS** the University of Alaska contributes significantly to the scientific body
23 of work relating to climate change, and the state has the opportunity to lead in global climate
24 research; and

25 **WHEREAS** the state is the only Arctic state in the nation and is properly positioned
26 to be an active and independent voice in international discourse relating to climate change and
27 adaptation policies, independent of the federal government; and

28 **WHEREAS** the House of Representatives recognizes the broad scope of issues
29 relating to climate change that must be addressed and the unique position the state occupies in
30 relation to those issues;

31 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the House of Representatives that a House Special Committee

1 on Climate Change is established to ensure advancement in understanding of current climate
2 research and to explore policy options relating to climate change effects, mitigation,
3 resilience, and adaptation in the state; and be it

4 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall
5 determine the number of representatives to be members of the committee, appoint the
6 members, and designate a member or members to chair the committee; and be it

7 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the House Special Committee on Climate Change may
8 meet during and between sessions of the Thirty-First Alaska State Legislature and is
9 terminated upon the convening of the First Regular Session of the Thirty-Second Alaska State
10 Legislature.