

SENATE CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 29(RES) am S

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE SENATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Amended: 3/23/12

Offered: 3/21/12

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES MILLETT, Gruenberg, Fairclough, Tuck, Thompson, Kerttula, Joule, Stoltze, Costello, Pruitt, Muñoz, Lynn, Gardner, Tammie Wilson, Petersen, Doogan, Foster, Gara, Neuman, Holmes, Peggy Wilson, Miller, Seaton, Edgmon, Dick, Austerman, Johansen, Herron, Johnson, Thomas, Guttenberg, Cissna, Gatto, Chenault, Feige, Hawker, Saddler, Keller, Olson, Kawasaki

SENATORS Coghill, Meyer, Ellis, Menard, Paskvan, Egan, Davis, McGuire, Stedman, Thomas, Wielechowski, Huggins, Giessel, Dyson, Olson

A RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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