Senate Joint Resolution No. 17

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 7

Senate Joint Resolution No. 17—Relative to greenhouse gases.

[Filed with Secretary of State April 26, 2010.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 17, Leno. Climate change: ocean acidification: Arctic.

This measure would reaffirm the Legislature's commitment to reducing greenhouse gases in California to 1990 levels by 2020. It would urge the United States Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gases and the federal government to persevere in its commitment to leading the world in efforts to address global climate change and ocean acidification, and reduce the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million.

WHEREAS, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an international body comprised of scientists and governments (including the United States), concluded in its Fourth Assessment Report completed in 2007 that "[w]arming of the climate system is unequivocal…[and m]ost of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations"; and

WHEREAS, Impacts from climate change are becoming apparent in California and around the world; and

WHEREAS, The Arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet, and Arctic climate change is predicted to result in major impacts in the region, some of which are already underway; and

WHEREAS, The planet's oceans are becoming more acidic and this ocean acidification, caused by emissions of carbon dioxide, will affect the Arctic more rapidly than other regions; and

WHEREAS, The United States is an Arctic nation; and

WHEREAS, The Arctic is home to unique communities that are an important part of the shared cultural tapestry of the world; and

WHEREAS, The Arctic is also home to some of the last remaining relatively pristine ecosystems, which support populations of some of the world's most iconic wildlife species such as brown and polar bears; caribou; wolves; bowhead, beluga, and gray whales; narwhals; and walruses; and

WHEREAS, The current and predicted impacts of Arctic climate change and ocean acidification threaten the health and welfare of people living in the Arctic; and

WHEREAS, Arctic climate change, ocean acidification, and their consequences are likely to cause harm to the health and welfare of Californians, including, as follows:

(a) Loss of Arctic sea ice and associated warming of the Arctic may alter winter storm tracks along the west coast of North America and precipitation patterns in California.

(b) Rapid warming of the Arctic may accelerate melt of the Greenland ice sheet with the potential to result in significant sea level rise this century.

(c) The stronger warming expected in the Arctic compared with lower latitudes could hasten thaw of terrestrial permafrost, potentially resulting in large releases of carbon dioxide and methane to the atmosphere, which would lead to further global warming.

(d) The changes to Arctic ecosystems will reverberate globally by affecting migratory species that depend on Arctic habitats, the gray whales, for example, which swim in California water on their journey to and from feeding grounds in the Arctic.

WHEREAS, The maintenance and rebuilding of Arctic sea ice is one measure of efforts to slow climate change; and

WHEREAS, The United States Supreme Court recently held that greenhouse gases are air pollutants as defined by the federal Clean Air Act, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency has issued a proposed finding that greenhouse gases endanger the public health and welfare; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the federal Clean Air Act, the United States Environmental Protection Agency has the authority and responsibility to regulate emissions of greenhouse gases; and

WHEREAS, Until recently, the United States was the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, and is now second only to China; and

WHEREAS, The economic costs of failing to mitigate climate change and ocean acidification will far outweigh the costs of regulating greenhouse gases; and

WHEREAS, Science about climate change and ocean acidification in the Arctic and its worldwide implications has been presented to the United States Environmental Protection Agency in a formal petition for rulemaking entitled "As Goes The Arctic So Goes The Planet" signed by mayors, villages, Alaska native organizations, and others; and

WHEREAS, With the passage of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Division 25.5 (commencing with Section 38500) of the Health and Safety Code), California is at the forefront of efforts in the United States to regulate greenhouse gases, and remains committed to this effort; and

WHEREAS, The State of California hosted the Governors' Global Climate Summit on the need to tackle climate change; and

WHEREAS, Scientific evidence suggests that if humanity wishes to preserve a planet like the one on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted, we must reduce the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide to at most 350 parts per million; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the California Legislature remains committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in California to 1990 levels by 2020; and be it further

Resolved, That the California Legislature urges the United States Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from mobile and stationary sources to protect the health and welfare of the Arctic, the rest of the United States, and the world; and be it further

Resolved, That the California Legislature urges the President and Congress of the United States to persevere in their commitment to become world leaders in the effort to address global climate change and ocean acidification, and reduce atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide to 350 parts per million; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

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