

Senate Joint Resolution No. 24

Dividend Protection Plan

Sponsor Statement

SJR 24 was introduced to make sure the Permanent Fund Dividend enjoys constitutional protection. Currently, the dividend exists at the sole pleasure and protection of a simple majority of the legislature.

The Constitution protects the principle of the Permanent Fund. However, each year, dividends, inflation-proofing and unspent earnings are at the whim of each legislature. Many Alaskans think that a vote of the people is required before changes can be made to the dividend program. This will only be true when the dividend is protected by the Constitution.

Until Alaskans feel confident that the Permanent Fund and the dividend is safe from legislative control, we will not be able to start discussion about what to do with any excess earnings. This resolution offers the security that voters want.

Royalties from the subsurface mineral estate endow the Permanent Fund. Alaska subsurface mineral rights are, in general, collectively owned by the state instead of by the individual landowners. By constitutionally protecting the dividend, we recognize compensation for the mineral estate most Alaskans do not receive if they own the land.

In summary, passage of SJR 24 gives Alaskans an opportunity to make their Permanent Fund Dividend a Constitutional mandate instead of a legislative option.

The Permanent Fund Dividend is money that has been promised to Alaskans. It comes from the resources we own as a whole and everyone is entitled to their share. Alaska subsurface mineral rights are collectively owned by the state instead of by individual landowners, and by enshrining the dividend, I am letting people know they do own a portion of those rights.