

March 14, 2002

Dear Editor:

On February 21st the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee brought an end to the Homer annexation issue.

A motion to pass [House Joint Resolution 18](#) out of the committee failed on a 6 to 1 vote. The failure of the House to move [HJR 39](#) clearly meant that Senate action on my companion resolution, [Senate Joint Resolution 34](#) was to no avail.

During the House and Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee joint meeting, I stated that if we did not oppose the current Homer annexation there would be “shivers of fear all over Alaska”. In fact, my office received calls from residents in Nikiski, Kasilof, and Sterling; wondering if their homes could be next.

This has been an extremely contentious issue for the residents of the South Peninsula. It pitted neighbor against neighbor and forced annexation on hundreds of people who were never given the opportunity to vote on the issue. Although the annexation by the City of Homer was not illegal, it certainly was not presented to the community in a “user friendly” manner. The correspondence, testimony, and calls received by my office were 3 to 1 against the annexation, and included many residents of Homer.

The Local Boundary Commission must step up to the plate and take into account the views of the residents of areas adjacent to cities. The process we just went through was not good public policy. They recently revised some of their regulations, but failed to do any changes in a “land grab” situation like this one. They clearly were aware of my concerns after I filed [SJR 16](#) over a year ago.

It is time for the healing process to begin and the duty and responsibility to accomplish this belongs to all of us. I have a few suggestions:

- Homer’s elected officials need to honor the pledge they made to truncate their terms and stand for re-election.
- Homer’s elected officials need to amend their ordinances to assure the residents of the newly annexed area can run for election this year.
- Homer’s elected officials need to work closely with the new areas to provide for smooth transfer of services.
- Newly annexed area residents should work with the City.

I would like to extend my thanks to annexation supporters and opponents alike for contacting me and providing me with their viewpoints.

Sincerely,

Senator John Torgerson