

SPONSOR STATEMENT

CSSJR 7(RES)

“Reinstate Wilderness Study Prohibition”

In 1981, President Reagan’s Secretary of the Interior issued a directive stating that BLM land in Alaska may not be considered for wilderness reviews as required by Section 603 of the Federal Land Planning and Management Act of 1976. The purpose of this directive was to comply with Congressional mandates in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

Sections 1320 and 1326 of ANILCA are often referred to as the “no more clauses” because they exempt Alaska from future federal wilderness designations and withdrawals exceeding 5,000 acres. ANILCA Section 1326 (b) states that no further studies of Federal lands in the State of Alaska shall be conducted for the purpose of establishing a conservation system unit, national recreation area, national conservation area, or for related or similar purposes.

Senate Joint Resolution 7 was introduced in response to Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt’s last-minute rescission of the 1981 directive. This rescission is disturbing for a variety of reasons. It is contrary to an Interior Department policy that has been an important tool for management and development of Alaska’s resources for nearly 20 years. The rescission was done without public comment or consultation with Alaska. Finally, with the absence of this policy, BLM will be able to manage its roadless land in Alaska as de facto wilderness areas in the expectation that Congress will eventually enact approving legislation.