

**Introduced by Senators Leno and Pavley**  
(Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Monning)

July 23, 2009

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

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 17, as introduced, 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.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,  
2 an international body comprised of scientists and governments  
3 (including the United States), concluded in its Fourth Assessment  
4 Report completed in 2007 that “[w]arming of the climate system  
5 is unequivocal...[and m]ost of the observed increase in global  
6 average temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due  
7 to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas  
8 concentrations”; and  
9 WHEREAS, Impacts from climate change are becoming  
10 apparent in California and around the world; and

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

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

7 WHEREAS, The United States is an Arctic nation; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

39 WHEREAS, The United States Supreme Court recently held  
40 that greenhouse gases are air pollutants as defined by the federal

1 Clean Air Act, and the United States Environmental Protection  
2 Agency has issued a proposed finding that greenhouse gases  
3 endanger the public health and welfare; and

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

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

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

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

18 WHEREAS, With the passage of the California Global Warming  
19 Solutions Act of 2006 (Division 25.5 (commencing with Section  
20 38500) of the Health and Safety Code), California is at the forefront  
21 of efforts in the United States to regulate greenhouse gases, and  
22 remains committed to this effort; and

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

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

30 *Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of*  
31 *California, jointly,* That the California Legislature remains  
32 committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in California to  
33 1990 levels by 2020; and be it further

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

39 *Resolved,* That the California Legislature urges the President  
40 and Congress of the United States to persevere in their commitment

- 1 to become world leaders in the effort to address global climate
- 2 change and ocean acidification, and reduce atmospheric
- 3 concentration of carbon dioxide to 350 parts per million; and be
- 4 it further
- 5 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
- 6 this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.