

112TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1229

To amend the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 to establish  
a United States Ambassador at Large for Arctic Affairs.

---

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 16, 2011

Mr. BEGICH introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred  
to the Committee on Foreign Relations

---

## A BILL

To amend the State Department Basic Authorities Act of  
1956 to establish a United States Ambassador at Large  
for Arctic Affairs.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “United States Ambas-  
5 sador at Large for Arctic Affairs Act of 2011”.

6 **SEC. 2. UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR ARC-**  
7 **TIC AFFAIRS.**

8 Title I of the State Department Basic Authorities Act  
9 of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2651a et seq.) is amended by adding  
10 at the end the following:

1 **“SEC. 63. UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR**  
2 **ARCTIC AFFAIRS.**

3 “(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

4 “(1) the United States is an Arctic nation  
5 with—

6 “(A) an approximately 700-mile border on  
7 the Arctic Ocean;

8 “(B) more than 100,000,000 acres of land  
9 above the Arctic Circle; and

10 “(C) an even broader area defined as Arctic  
11 by temperature that includes the Bering Sea  
12 and Aleutian Islands;

13 “(2) the Arctic region of the United States—

14 “(A) is known to the indigenous population  
15 as Inuvikput, or the ‘place where we live’;

16 “(B) is home to an indigenous population  
17 that has subsisted for millennia on the abun-  
18 dance of marine mammals, fish, and wildlife,  
19 many species of which are unique to the Arctic  
20 region;

21 “(C) has produced more than  
22 16,000,000,000 barrels of oil, and, according to  
23 the United States Geological Service, holds  
24 30,000,000,000 barrels of oil and 220 trillion  
25 cubic feet of natural gas, making the region

1           fundamentally important to the interest of the  
2           United States;

3           “(3) since 1959, temperatures in the Arctic re-  
4           gion of the United States have warmed by 3 to 4 de-  
5           grees Celsius, a rate of increase more than twice the  
6           global average;

7           “(4) the Arctic ice pack is rapidly diminishing  
8           and thinning, and the National Oceanic and Atmos-  
9           pheric Administration estimates the Arctic Ocean  
10          may be ice free during the summer months in as few  
11          as 30 years;

12          “(5) these changes are having a significant im-  
13          pact on the communities and ecosystems of the in-  
14          digenous people of the Arctic, and the marine mam-  
15          mals, fish, and wildlife upon which the indigenous  
16          population depends;

17          “(6) these changes are opening new portions of  
18          the Arctic continental shelf of the United States to  
19          possible development for offshore oil and gas, com-  
20          mercial fishing, marine shipping, and tourism;

21          “(7) increased industrial development and com-  
22          mercial activity in the Arctic region requires a  
23          heightened diplomatic presence to address important  
24          issues that involve the United States and Pan-Arctic  
25          countries or the Arctic Council;

1           “(8) the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental  
2 forum established in 1996, includes representatives  
3 from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway,  
4 the Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United  
5 States and 6 Permanent Participants who represent  
6 the indigenous peoples of the Arctic;

7           “(9) the Arctic Council—

8           “(A) is committed to the well-being of the  
9 people who live in the Arctic region;

10           “(B) recognizes the special relationship in-  
11 digenous people have with the Arctic region;

12           “(C) acknowledges the unique contribu-  
13 tions indigenous communities make to the Arc-  
14 tic region;

15           “(D) is committed to sustainable economic  
16 and social development in the Arctic region, im-  
17 proving health conditions in the Arctic region,  
18 and fostering cultural well-being in the Arctic  
19 region; and

20           “(E) is committed to protecting the Arctic  
21 environment, including Arctic ecosystems, bio-  
22 diversity in the Arctic region, and the conserva-  
23 tion and sustainable use of Arctic natural re-  
24 sources;

1           “(10) other Arctic countries are pursuing  
2 claims for Arctic seabed resources under the United  
3 Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, signed  
4 at Montego Bay, Jamaica, December 10, 1982;

5           “(11) the North Pacific Fishery Management  
6 Council recommends closing commercial fishing op-  
7 erations in the Arctic waters of the United States  
8 until sustainable fishing is scientifically determined,  
9 an action that will only be effective with cooperation  
10 from neighboring Arctic countries;

11           “(12) increased commercial activity in the Ar-  
12 tic region raises concerns regarding national secu-  
13 rity, environmental protection, and the cultural and  
14 subsistence needs of indigenous communities;

15           “(13) the United States seeks to maintain, and  
16 further develop, a constructive and cordial relation-  
17 ship with the members of the Arctic Council; and

18           “(14) the United States has not established an  
19 Ambassador at Large for Arctic Affairs, who would  
20 enhance the ability of the United States to respond  
21 quickly and appropriately to issues of mutual inter-  
22 est to the Arctic Council and Arctic countries gen-  
23 erally.

24           “(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within  
25 the Department of State an Ambassador at Large for Arc-

1 tie Affairs (referred to in this section as the ‘Ambas-  
2 sador’), appointed under subsection (c).

3 “(c) APPOINTMENT.—The Ambassador shall be ap-  
4 pointed by the President, by and with the advice and con-  
5 sent of the Senate.

6 “(d) DUTIES.—

7 “(1) DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION.—Subject  
8 to the direction of the President and the Secretary  
9 of State, the Ambassador is authorized to represent  
10 the United States in matters and cases relevant to  
11 Arctic affairs in—

12 “(A) contacts with foreign governments,  
13 intergovernmental organizations, and special-  
14 ized agencies of the United Nations, the Arctic  
15 Council, and other international organizations  
16 of which the United States is a member; and

17 “(B) multilateral conferences and meetings  
18 relating to Arctic affairs.

19 “(2) ADVISORY ROLE.—The Ambassador shall  
20 be a principal adviser to the President and the Sec-  
21 retary of State regarding matters affecting Arctic  
22 affairs and shall make recommendations regarding  
23 the policies of the United States relating to Arctic  
24 affairs.

1           “(e) FUNDING.—The Secretary of State shall provide  
2 the Ambassador with such funds as may be necessary to  
3 carry out the duties described in subsection (d).”.

○