

SENATOR PAUL TSONGAS

Speech to the Senate

November 15, 1979

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ALASKA — THE CONSERVATION VOTE OF THE CENTURY

Mr. President, today my colleagues join me in placing before the Senate a substitute version of the Alaska lands conservation bill. We introduce this substitute with great respect for the careful deliberations of the Congress to date. We act in the sober conviction that Alaska represents the greatest conservation challenge of the 20th Century.

The Alaska lands bill reported by the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is now designated "H.R. 39," although it ~~text~~ is ~~totally~~ ^{overwhelmingly} different from H.R. 39 as it passed the House of Representatives. Our substitute is formally Senate Amendment No. to H.R. 39. It is intended to assure that when our distinguished colleagues debate and decide the vital issues of the Alaska lands legislation, they will have a ^{clear} choice between the Committee's reported bill and a ~~clear~~ ^{clear} comprehensive alternative.

(more)

~~In introducing such a substitute, it is our intention to assure that when the Senate debates and decides the issues of the Alaska Lands legislation, each Senator will have the choice not only of the Committee's reported bill, but also of a clear and comprehensive alternative.~~

Positive Elements from Contending Approaches

This great conservation debate over Alaska lands has come down now to a fundamental choice between the kind of bill already passed by the House of Representatives and the very different kind of bill reported by our Committee. The substitute we offer today is offered in the spirit of compromise, as an effort to bridge the wide differences between those two approaches.

It is my privilege to sit on the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and to have participated actively in the mark-up of this bill. I want to commend in the highest terms the leadership of the Senator from Washington, Mr. Jackson, in bringing this complex legislation through in 12 mark-up sessions in such a way that we could develop a series of important compromises on some of the most central issues involved. In particular, the Senator from Alaska, Mr. Stevens, and I were able to work out agreements that resolved a number of the central issues by reaching good, sound compromises. For example, we worked out a compromise to assure that a molybdenum mine can go forward, with needed road access, within the Misty Fjords area in southeast Alaska. That compromise resolves one of the most thorny and most hotly debated issues in this entire bill -- and it was achieved through the good working processes of the Energy Committee and through the

(which the Committee adopted)

we adopted a ~~whole~~ series of important and helpful compromises which go a long way toward resolving some of the central issues involved.

Therefore, I have instead chosen to adopt the House-passed bill as the basic structure for this substitute amendment, but to leaven it by incorporating many of the specific compromises we worked out in the Committee.

In this substitute, I believe we are offering the Senate the choice combining the best of the House-passed bill and the best of our own Committee's efforts to resolve some of these major central issues.

This substitute is a measure ^{that} ~~which~~ Senators may support in the spirit of the House-passed measure, which enjoys such enormous public support all across America. At the same time, Senators may support this substitute with the confidence that it embodies important compromises which meet a number of the central concerns which have been raised by our respected colleague, Senator Stevens, and by the state of Alaska.

In particular, I want to call attention to five of the major compromises which were worked out in the Energy Committee and which are embodied in virtually the same form in this substitute. In doing so, I ~~want to~~ stress that these central issues were the main focus of our discussions and debates in the committee. The compromises we reached resolve the greater number of the really central issues around which the Alaska lands issue has been debated. Among them are several which have been viewed as critical by the State of Alaska.