



# Alaska State Legislature

## Representative Matt Claman

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### House Joint Resolution 2 Sponsor Statement

*Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to the duration of regular sessions of the Legislature*

House Joint Resolution 2 amends the Constitution of the State of Alaska to limit the length of legislative sessions to 90 days. The resolution aligns the Constitution with the statutory limit passed by voters in a 2006 ballot initiative limiting the Legislature to 90 day sessions. The variation between state statute and the constitution creates inconsistency in the law governing the length of regular sessions. Since 2008, when the ballot initiative took effect, the Legislature has only met the statutory 90-day limit four times. In 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 the Legislature ran past the statutory limit, incurring cumulative costs to the state of more than \$1,000,000.

By limiting the length of the legislative sessions, HJR 2 serves three primary purposes. First, it forces the Legislature to focus its attention on state finances and shorten the schedule for adopting a budget. Second, a 90-day session reduces the quantity of "personal" legislation. A 90-day session will make sure the Legislature focuses its attention on the most important issues and is less likely to get side-tracked with special interest matters. Third, if circumstances arise that require a special session, the governor is able to narrow the agenda to vital issues and prevent consideration of non-essential legislation.

The failure to adjourn in 90 days also limits the ability for Alaska to have true citizen legislators — people who have regular jobs and serve in the Legislature. The unpredictably long sessions make it more and more difficult for citizen legislators – fishermen, contractors, administrators, lawyers, miners, etc. – to serve. In the long-term, repeat extended and special sessions will lead to more full-time legislators and fewer citizen legislators.

HJR 2 allows Alaskan voters to decide, once and for all, on the length of regular sessions of the Legislature by voting on an amendment to the Alaska State Constitution. If passed by Alaskan voters, the amendment would change the length of the regular session in the Alaska State Constitution from 120 days to 90 days. That change would align the Constitution with State Statute.