**Shipping and Environmental Arctic Leadership Act (SEAL Act)**

**Office of Senator Lisa Murkowski**

**Purpose:** Establishes a congressionally chartered seaway development corporation in the Arctic.

**What does this legislation do?**

The bill creates a U.S. Arctic Seaway Development Corporation. The Corporation will work with representatives from the Secretary of Defense operating through the Secretary of the Army, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, State Department, the Department in which the U.S. Coast Guard is operating, and Department of Transportation (DOT)—as well as representatives from the State of Alaska, the Alaskan business community, Alaskan coastal and subsistence communities, and the Alaskan maritime labor organizations—to develop services to Arctic shipping that are necessary for safe, secure, and reliable Arctic maritime activity.

**What authorities will be granted to the Corporation?**

* The legislation will authorize the Corporation to develop a voluntary tariff model—consistent with customary international law– to help fund the infrastructural and environmental demands of safe and reliable shipping in the Arctic Region.
* It authorizes the Corporation to work with the Army Corps of Engineers, the State of Alaska, and regional port authorities, to construct deep-water port facilities within the U.S. Arctic Region—a system of Arctic Ports.
* It requires that the Corporation collaborate with the State of Alaska and the U.S. Coast Guard in providing facilities for icebreaker vessels operating in the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean.
* It requires the Corporation to work in partnership with Arctic residents and Arctic shippers to build an appropriate system that will support shipping in the Arctic in such a way that will protect the environment and biodiversity of the ocean Alaskans depend on for food.

**Where does this language come from?**

* This legislation follows work commissioned by the Iceland based NGO Arctic Circle’s “Mission Council on Shipping and Ports.”
* It builds upon the work the eight-nation Arctic Council has done to establish good rules for shipping in the Arctic through the International Maritime Organization, with the adoption of a mandatory Polar Code.
* It follows upon the 2011 creation of an Arctic-focused search and rescue agreement, the 2013 oil spill prevention and response agreement, and the 2017 science agreement.

**Why do we need this legislation?**

Changes to the Arctic brought about by warming temperatures will inevitably result in an increase in international ship traffic in the Region. An increase in shipping means greater demand for services, and processes to ensure that Arctic shipping can be reliable for shippers who need to transport their goods from one place to another.