

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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## Senator Gary Stevens

### SPONSOR STATEMENT

#### SCR 11

#### *“Establishing a Commission to Review the Official State Seal of Alaska”*

The origins of Alaska’s official State Seal, especially as regards the manner in which it was designed and promulgated, appears to have been lost in the mists of history. No record has been found to date as to who exactly designed it. Historical record only shows somewhat more clearly that the decision to adopt Alaska’s highest insignia was arbitrarily made by its earliest appointed military leaders, or later politically-appointed chief executives with substantial background in military service in either or both the American Civil and Spanish-American Wars.

“District” Governor John H. Kinkead is credited for having commissioned Alaska’s earliest Seal, adopted administratively sometime after the enactment of the First Organic Act of 1884. This version 1 included depictions of the Aurora, a mountainous landscape, dense forest, an iceberg, military and missionary ships, a placer miner using a pickaxe, igloos, a kayaker, and beached fur seals being readied for harvest.

The subsequent “Territorial” Seal, a version 2 commissioned by the first territorial Governor Walter Eli Clark, was adopted administratively in 1910. Version 3 was then rendered by an unknown draftsman in Juneau in 1913. Historical records indicate it was Gov. Clark who sought a design reflecting more of the region’s industrial growth rather than the previous Seal’s focus on arctic and indigenous lifestyles. The fur seal harvest was struck, as were the igloos, kayak, and placer miner. What replaced those ideas was a mining smelter in hills cleared of trees, a locomotive steam engine, trusses and timber, marine cargo ships, and a horse-drawn wheat harvest. A salmon and fur seal were situated around the outer concentric circle, perhaps as an afterthought or to balance the symmetry within the circle boundaries.

The State Seal we see today, adopted upon statehood in 1959, continues to hold up the late 1880s to early 1900s era representing Alaska’s beginnings from the perspective of western colonial expansion.

Considering a redesign of Alaska’s Official State Seal, to include a wide group of stakeholders, artistic and design professionals, and a transparent process for finding consensus on such a redesign, would serve to better reflect the broad cultural heritage of Alaskan peoples.

SCR 11 proposes to cast a wider net, capturing a modernized emblem to represent Alaskan values beyond just resource extraction and industrial development.

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