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SB 148 ver. I – Sponsor Statement

Autonomous Vehicle Regulations

“An Act regulating autonomous vehicles; and providing for an effective date.”

Autonomous vehicles are becoming increasingly prevalent across the United States. In many places, there are already fully autonomous vehicles operating on the highways and intercity roads. California serves as a perfect example, where fully autonomous taxis can be seen roaming the city of San Francisco. With this surge in technological innovation has come the need to develop reasonable regulatory measures to ensure that public roads remain as safe as possible.

Alaska currently has no laws specifically regulating autonomous vehicles or defining liability in the case of an accident. However, there are various examples from other states of how they have addressed the unique challenges posed by autonomous vehicles. Our bill takes inspiration from these examples while taking the specific needs of Alaska into consideration.

This bill primarily seeks to address the questions of liability and safety. Since driving errors are often not the fault of the operator with autonomous vehicles, we hope to establish a chain of liability that would take into consideration possible operator, mechanic, or manufacturer/programmer errors. The issue of safety is a huge concern, especially in Alaska, since there is very little evidence of how well autonomous vehicles handle snowy and icy conditions. This bill would require an operator to be present in the vehicle at all times and be responsible for the safe operation of the vehicle. SB 148 would allow reasonable uses of autonomous vehicle technology with some specific restrictions to ensure the safety of Alaskans on our public roadways.

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