

Alaska State Senate

Senator Forrest Dunbar

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

SJR 13: Amend Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

SJR 13 supports the *Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act of 2023* introduced in S.2615 by Senators Murkowski and Sullivan and H.R. 6489 by Congresswoman Peltola in response to the desire of the state of Alaska to end the Municipal Lands Trust (MLT).

Rural communities across Alaska are facing challenges due to the lack of affordable housing and limited opportunities for economic and community development. One of the contributing factors challenging many communities is a legacy of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA).

When it was enacted, section 14 (c)(3) of ANCSA required the reservation of lands allotted to Alaska Native Village Corporations for future municipalities. Today, those lands are held in trust by the state of Alaska through the MLT. The architects of ANCSA did not consider that many communities would not incorporate under Alaska state law. Only 8 ANCSA villages have formed a new municipality to date, the last in 1995. Today, the MLT holds approximately 11,500 acres and the state of Alaska is forced by its trust responsibility to manage these lands in way that limits access and opportunity in communities.

SJR 13 expresses the Alaska State Legislature's support for the *Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act of 2023*, joining groups like the Alaska Federation of Natives, Alaska Native Village Corporation Association and State of Alaska in support of dissolving the trust and returning lands to support community development. I urge you to support SJR 13.