

Alaska House of Representatives

Rep. Neal Foster
P.O. Box 1630
Nome, Alaska 99762

Phone: (907) 443-5036
Fax: (907) 443-2162



During the Legislative Session
Alaska State Capitol, Room 511
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Phone: (907) 465-3789
Fax: (907) 465-3242

House Finance Committee Co-Chairman

Sponsor Statement for HB 167

“An Act renaming the Ruby Airport as Harold Esmailka Airport; and providing for an effective date.”

HB 167 would recognize the contributions of Harold Esmailka to the community of Ruby and Alaska's aviation industry by renaming the Ruby Airport to the Harold Esmailka Airport.

Harold Esmailka, of Ruby is a pioneer in Alaskan aviation. Over his lengthy career as a pilot, Harold flew across Alaska and became friends with many people in dozens of Alaskan communities. After concluding his service in the U.S. Army in 1954, Harold bought his first airplane – a two seat 65-horsepower Aeronca Chief. Ten years later, he and his wife Florence settled in Ruby. There they opened the Ruby Trading Company, which provided groceries and goods for the community.

In 1970, Harold opened Harold's Air Service. The business flew to 63 Alaskan villages and had 28 aircraft in its fleet. Harold's Air Service provided medivac services to Alaska's interior and grew so large that he moved its base to Galena to accommodate its commercial needs. In 1982, he sold Harold's Air Service with plans to retire, but his heart called him back to the skies. Just four years later, he purchased Tanana Air Service and built the company into a small trailblazer for interior aviation.

Tanana Air Service was based out of Fairbanks. It provided mail, cargo, and passenger transportation services to more than 80 communities. Harold also provided free transportation to the brothers, sisters, and clergy at the Fairbanks Catholic Diocese as they traveled to local villages.

HB 167 renames the Ruby Airport to the Harold Esmailka Airport, and thus pays homage to an incredible father, husband, veteran, entrepreneur, and Alaskan aviation legend.