



Tongass Historical Museum
629 Dock Street
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901
Phone: 907-225-5600
Fax: 907-225-5602

Totem Heritage Center
Mailing address: 629 Dock Street
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901
Phone: 907-225-5900
Fax: 907-225-5901

March 19, 2014

Representative Bob Herron
State Capitol Room 411
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Herron,

I was so pleased to hear that House Bill 333, which would establish a museum construction grant program, is moving closer to becoming a reality. Alaska's museums and cultural centers contribute to our economy and quality of life through employment and heritage tourism. They educate children and adults and enrich our communities by developing a sense of place and identity. However, many of Alaska's museums currently operate in facilities that are inadequate for serving their communities and missions. If our collection and preservation institutions are to continue impacting their communities in meaningful ways, support from the state for our museums must be established.

Ketchikan's Tongass Historical Museum, which formerly shared our Centennial Building with the public library, aims to renovate the facility for sole museum use. This is a major undertaking, due in particular to the cost of bringing the nearly 50-year-old building into compliance with current building codes, accessibility requirements, etc. With an expanded and renovated facility, our collections would be better cared for and broadened and our programs more diverse and dynamic. Furthermore, our museum has the capacity to be an economic driver for Ketchikan's large tourism industry. The City of Ketchikan, which operates the museum, has already allocated financial resources to the project. However, given the number and magnitude of the capital projects facing the City, state participation is necessary if our museum expansion is to continue moving forward.

The Tongass Historical Museum is not unique in its needs. Nearly half of Alaska's museums are either currently involved in a construction project or will be in the next five years. Most communities in need of expanded museums are not able to shoulder the associated costs alone. A systematic approach that would prioritize the capital funding needs of museums as proposed in HB333 is a solution that is equitable and attainable and would serve the state for years to come.

I fully support HB333 as it would impact not only the Tongass Historical Museum's capacity to serve the Ketchikan community, but it will surely enable many other museums around the state to more fully serve their communities in important and meaningful ways.

Kind regards and thank you,

Lacey Simpson, Director
City of Ketchikan Museum Department

Cc: Sen. Bert Stedman
Rep. Peggy Wilson