



February 6, 2017

Senator Gary Stevens
Alaska State Capitol
Room 429
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Stevens:

I am contacting you today to thank you for your **support of SB7, establishing a museum construction grant program**. Research shows that almost half of all museums in the state are either currently involved in a construction project or will be in the next five years, and that includes the UA Museum of the North. This bill provides the structure for establishing a systematic approach to prioritizing museum capital project funding requests in the state.

Museums and cultural organizations in Alaska are a critical part of the educational and economic infrastructure, spurring tourism and partnering with schools to teach the local curriculum. They contribute to our economy and wellbeing by:

- Employing over 260 Alaskans (~92 Fairbanksans alone);
- Spending over \$23,553,294 annually in the State (UAMN's annual operating budget is \$4.9 million, approximately 1/3 of which is a result of grants and contracts);
- Hosting over 624,695 visitors annually (UAMN welcomed around 90,000 visitors in FY16); and
- Serving over 36,290 school children annually (approximately 2500 Fairbanks kids visited UAMN last year).

Despite this vital role of museums, our facilities and collections are at risk through decreasing federal, local, and charitable giving. As collections grow and visitation increases, the pressure on our aging infrastructure must be managed. The **UA Museum of the North** is no stranger to this dilemma. We are proud of our accomplishments: we're expanding and developing new public programming, adding new private and corporate sponsorships to those established supporters, successful in-house curated exhibitions focusing on Fairbanks-based expertise and collections strengths, increasing visitation and collections usage by professional and amateur researchers (over 2,000 individual contacts with researchers or visitors to collections last year), while continuing to add thousands of artifacts and specimens (over 73,000 items last year) through donations, scientific field collecting, and agreements with agencies. Regardless of these achievements, we are hampered by a 37-year-old exhibit gallery and increasingly diminished collections curation space. In order to maintain and improve our world-class reputation as the largest assemblage of natural, cultural, and art history collections in the state and as a top visitor attraction for Interior Alaska, we will need to renovate our public gallery as well as identify a solution to our growing collections curation space crisis. And we are but one of dozens of Alaskan museums and cultural centers who desperately need infrastructure improvements who could be helped through this new grant program.

Thank you for supporting SB7, establishing a museum construction grant program, so that museums throughout the state of Alaska may continue to serve their communities by preserving our collective heritage. By helping us make this bill a reality, you are speaking up for Alaska's museums.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angela J. Linn".

Angela J. Linn
Senior Collections Manager, Ethnology & History
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CC Senator Dennis Egan, Senator Bert Stedman, Senator Click Bishop
CC Representative Justin Parish, Representative Dan Ortiz