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Sponsor Statement

SB92: Derelict Vessels Act

Alaska has become home to an ever-aging fleet of vessels. These vessels have become uneconomical to operate and therefore remain moored in public harbors or grounded in State tidelands. We have an increasing number of derelict and abandoned vessels throughout Alaska's coast and rivers, with hundreds currently documented. There are over 40 large abandoned barges in Steamboat Slough (Bethel) alone. SB92 will provide a program with a clear, pro-active strategy for responding to derelict vessels in public waters. Without action the state of Alaska and its citizens will bear the brunt of not only our own aging fleet, but also of vessels coming north for unencumbered disposal.

A report titled *Trends and Opportunities in the Alaska Maritime Industrial Support Sector* (2014) noted "By 2025, the Alaska fleet will include roughly 3,100 vessels between 28' and 59' that are more than 45 years old...the Alaska fleet also includes 75 passenger vessels, tugs, and barges over 50 years old..." While this represents a field of opportunity for shipbuilders, it fails to recognize the absence of a cradle-to-grave plan for thousands of retired vessels. SB92 is a critical step towards preventing and managing derelict vessels throughout Alaska.

This bill balances the public's rights and freedoms of vessel ownership with the substantial financial, environmental and navigational burden when vessels are abandoned in state waters. SB92 raises the bar of vessel ownership similar to the responsibility of owning and operating a motor vehicle, with more consistent registration requirements, a titling system for documenting transfer of ownership and an insurance requirement for vessels engaged in commercial endeavors for over 90 days annually in Alaska.

SB92 also updates and improves due process for vessel owners and clarifies the impoundment process for agencies and municipalities. It allows for actual enforcement of Chapter 30.30 through civil actions as well as increased penalties in criminal proceedings. SB92, takes a critically-important step forward to address the current and growing derelict vessel problem in Alaska.