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SSHB 220\Ver. G SPONSOR STATEMENT

"An Act relating to easements and rights-of-way in state parks."

House Bill 220 protects private property rights and ensures that Alaska's utility providers can maintain and upgrade critical infrastructure in a timely, predictable manner, while continuing to safeguard our state parks.

Private lands and essential utilities are often interwoven with state park boundaries. When easement decisions are delayed or subjected to shifting standards, property owners face uncertainty and utilities are unable to complete needed upgrades. In some cases, prolonged administrative review has resulted in projects being deferred or abandoned altogether, not because they failed statutory standards, but because the process lacked certainty. HB 220 establishes that certainty.

Version G requires the Department of Natural Resources to grant an easement when clear statutory criteria are met and prevents the substitution of lesser permits in place of a lawful easement. It ensures that granted easements provide adequate and feasible access for the full lifecycle of utility infrastructure, including installation, operation, maintenance, upgrade, removal, and replacement.

The bill creates a firm 60-day decision deadline. If the department does not act within that timeframe, the easement is considered approved. This provision promotes accountability and ensures that necessary infrastructure improvements are not stalled indefinitely.

HB 220 also modernizes the application process by allowing GPS-based surveys and requiring that environmental review be proportional to a project's scope and likely impacts. It prohibits duplicative studies, unrelated off-site requirements, vague conditions, and unequal treatment of applicants. At the same time, DNR retains authority to impose reasonable conditions necessary to protect park resources, public safety, and the environment.

The bill also clarifies that "public interest" includes consideration of access to private property, improvements to public utility services and infrastructure, and benefits to local communities and Alaska's economy.

HB 220 strengthens due process, improves government accountability, supports infrastructure development, and preserves responsible stewardship of Alaska's state parks. It is a balanced, common-sense approach that protects both access and conservation for generations to come.

Any questions, please contact Elesheva Almedia, Rep. Kevin McCabe, at (907) 465-2679