

COMMENTARY

Three examples that show Alaskans need the right to repair

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📷 An electronics repair shop in Eagle River on Feb 19, 2026. (Image courtesy of Justin Castle)

Alaskans are a pretty resourceful bunch – when things break, we fix them. But sometimes, the deck gets stacked against us. As a business owner in Eagle River, Alaska, I see this firsthand. My business, Eagle River Electronics, fixes a wide range of products, making sure equipment keeps going and stays out of the trash. We do our best to service the needs of our community, but manufacturers have made it harder to fix a range of products, and the community suffers because of it.

Passing right to repair legislation in Juneau, like SB 111 and HB 162, and federal legislation on software locks would ensure that independent businesses like mine, as well as individuals, can access the tools and resources necessary to keep things working.

In January 2026 alone, I have at least three examples of how right to repair could have saved Alaskans from undue hardships.

First, a man who makes his living plowing snow came to our shop in a panic because the control board for his truck-mounted plow went out. The company who manufactures this told him to mail it in and expect it to be repaired and sent back in 3 months, when winter is practically over. The manufacturer doesn't provide access to schematics or documentation, which would enable a shop like mine to diagnose and repair the issue. The man had no recourse to get his plow fixed this winter. Last check, he was looking for new work and worrying about keeping a roof over his child's head.

Second, another man came into my shop. He does CNC (computer numerical control) machine work for designing countertops for new construction and remodels. A large part of his business was built around a specific machine that was made over 30 years ago. The business that manufactured it has since closed its doors. When he contacted us, we were successfully able to diagnose the CNC machine's issue: a faulty power supply. But unfortunately, the standards have changed. We could not determine what kind of power it should deliver – 12 volt? 15 volt? We could manually re-wire a new, modern day power supply to fit the needs of the machine, but without documentation it would be risky or potentially dangerous. Moving forward, Right to Repair rules would ensure that the technical documentation would be available to allow for repairs even after a manufacturer goes out of business – but for now, we are stuck with a minor issue causing a huge headache for a local business.

Finally, a mother came to us because her new “smart” baby monitor was sharing unknown information over the internet when she was not using it. She got the device to keep an eye on her child, but there is no need for the camera to be sending data when it's not being used. The baby monitor had a camera and could see where the baby was changed. This woman was very concerned with how that footage could be used. The software behind this device is not public, and digital locks, protected by federal law, mean that even though she owns the device, we could not help her modify it to protect her child. Our advice: Disconnect and discontinue use.

I could go on – these are three examples in just the last month. There are hundreds of additional cases where our lack of a right to repair pose a financial and/or safety risk to Alaskans.

Right to repair is about more than just independent repair businesses like mine. It's about fathers having the right to get critical equipment repaired in a timely manner when it's needed to keep a roof over their families' heads. It's about the business owner who has been delivering quality results for over three decades to be able to continue to deliver the same tried-and-true quality craftsmanship that his community has grown to love. It is about mothers having a right to be informed of what their child is being exposed to and being able to protect their children.

I would like to see Alaska recapture the can-do American attitude that built this country and stand up for the rights of owners and repair shops to fix the products we buy. As a business

owner with a vested interest in the well-being and growth of his community, I am proud to stand for the right to repair at every opportunity.