

Stuart Relay

From: Nathan Clements [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 2, 2026 12:30 PM
To: House State Affairs
Cc: Rep. Zack Fields
Subject: HB303 Input - Nathan Clements

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Hello!

My name is Nathan, and I am an Anchorage resident and car enthusiast. I am writing in to express support for **HB303**, as well as provide some context and background around it. I'll break this into 3 parts and try to be brief.

1. The Main Issue:

The federal government allows people to import vehicles from other countries that aren't sold in the US. For newer cars, this is extremely cost prohibitive and impractical, as they are required to be tested and modified until they meet current US safety and emissions standards.

There is, however, an exception for vehicles 25 years or older. These vehicles can be imported without being required to meet modern federal safety and emissions standards. Most US states recognize and follow this rule, allowing people to legally import foreign cars as new as 2001.

Alaska, however, has stricter rules. Whether intentional or not, Alaska DMV has a policy that states a fixed date in the 1980's, rather than a rolling 25 year or older date. While people in other states can currently import, register and operate cars as new as 2001, Alaska residents are being denied title and registration for those same legally imported vehicles.

Having imported an early 90's Japanese vehicle myself, in compliance with federal laws, I was shocked to suddenly run into issues with titling and registering it.

2. Why now?

It was brought up in a Senate hearing on this issue that this rule has been in place in Alaska for 20 years, but is only recently becoming an issue. Why is that?

In the late 90's and early 2000's, Japanese car culture exploded in the US. The car scene was forever changed. It inspired a bunch of movies and video games, popularizing a whole bunch of Japanese cars. These Japanese cars of that era are to Gen X and Millennials like hot rods and muscle cars were to older generations. I'm 35 and myself and most of my peers grew up on these movies and video games featuring these Japanese dream cars. But because of the 25 year rule (and our lack of money as teenagers) we weren't allowed to import them - until now. After years and years of waiting, many of those cars we idolized as kids are now legally eligible to be imported. Now imagine how it feels to find out the dream car you waited 25 years to import and spent a bunch of money to import, isn't allowed to be operated on Alaskan roads. It's incredibly frustrating.

3. Incorrect Registration Category

There's also a weird side issue to all this. The Alaska rule is being inconsistently enforced, allowing some vehicles to be registered as normal, some to be rejected, and some to be registered as an "APV" (all-purpose vehicle, limited to roads 45mph or under, only in certain communities).

There is a second category of imported vehicle that has become super popular in recent years. Japanese KEI cars are a category of Japanese vehicle that are small - like the size of the Smart car or a Geo Metro. Among these vehicles are KEI trucks. These small trucks are similar in size to 90's US trucks like Ford Rangers and Chevy S10's, except more utilitarian. They typically have cargo beds with fold-down sides, sometimes dump-beds, and are often very capable 4x4 vehicles. As modern trucks in the US market have grown exponentially, both in size and cost, these small but capable Japanese trucks have exploded in popularity, satisfying a market segment that US auto manufactures have abandoned.

For some unknown reason, the DMV has allowed some of these imported trucks to be registered, but they brand them as an APV. Basically no different than an ATV on paper, but that couldn't be farther from reality. These trucks are completely road legal in most other states and are fully capable of highway speeds. They are a normal car. But classifying them as an APV makes them basically undrivable in Alaska as the number of communities that allow APV's on roadways is very small.

Conclusion

I am asking for your support in putting the rolling 25 year rule into law, in alignment with other US states and the federal government, and I'm also hoping to find some clarity in the whole APV situation.

I appreciate your time, and please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Regards,
Nathan Clements
Anchorage, Fairview Resident

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