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Senate Bill 207

Sponsor Statement

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Alaskans' rights to their private property should be respected and protected. When those rights are violated, there should be a swift and certain remedy for property owners in our state. Senate Bill 207 will provide Alaska homeowners with a better process to regain possession of residential property from individuals who are simply unlawfully occupying it.

“Squatting,” taking up uninvited residence in someone else’s unoccupied dwelling, is sadly becoming increasingly common in Alaska, where residences are often seasonally occupied by their owners. Owners are faced with unnecessarily lengthy, and expensive legal proceedings when simply attempting to get unlawful occupants out of their home and struggle against legal protections that squatters are often entitled to under laws that were intended to deal with disputes between proper legal tenants and landlords, not with flagrant trespassers.

SB 207 establishes a process that lets property owners seek prompt law enforcement assistance in removing unlawful occupants. Officers will be authorized to serve the occupant with notice to vacate the dwelling when specific criteria are met. The owner must attest, under penalty of perjury, that the occupant never had any rental agreement or ownership interest in the private property and that they are not an immediate family member. Officers must confirm that the statutory requirements appear to be satisfied before taking any action authorized under the proposed law. The bill in turn imposes liability on owners who attempt to wrongfully remove legal occupants under its authority. SB 207 provides strong protections and remedies for those improperly displaced, including monetary damages and full recovery of attorney’s fees.

In addition, SB 207 clarifies the property offenses of forgery and deceptive business practices, targeting individuals who advertise for sale or lease a dwelling when they have no right to.

Alaskans should be secure in their homes. Property owners should never face unnecessary delays or financial burdens when they need someone removed from their home who has absolutely no legal right to be there. Senate Bill 207 offers a practical, workable, and balanced approach that protects the valuable property rights of Alaskans.

I respectfully urge your support for this legislation.

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