



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Löki Gale Tobin
Education Committee Chair

EDUCATION
HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES
JUDICIARY
TRANSPORTATION

SB 287

Sponsor Statement

SB 287 establishes the Joint Legislative Alaska Native Languages Academic Task Force to address an urgent and growing crisis: the rapid loss of Alaska Native languages and the academic infrastructure that sustains them. Decades of research, documentation, and teacher training—much of it centered in the Alaska Native Language Center—are at risk due to staffing shortages, funding instability, and declining institutional capacity.

Recognizing the critical importance of the research, preservation, and continuation of Alaska Native Languages, the state legislature created the Alaska Native Language Center through legislation in 1972. SB 287 creates a bicameral task force to conduct a comprehensive review of Alaska’s academic efforts in language preservation and revitalization fifty-four years after the legislature took action.

The Joint Legislative Alaska Native Languages Academic Task Force will engage directly with Alaska Native communities, educators, and experts to assess current challenges, identify risks to existing research, and recommend strategies to strengthen teacher training, expand research capacity, and ensure long-term sustainability.

SB 287 lays the groundwork for a coordinated, forward-looking state strategy that respects Indigenous knowledge systems, supports community priorities, and ensures that Alaska Native languages—and the knowledge they carry—are preserved and accessible for future generations.