



April 25, 2023

RE: Support for House Bills 93 and 104 and Senate Bill 87

Dear Governor Mike Dunleavy and members of the 33rd Alaska Legislature,

As an organization that advocates supporting and encouraging policies and initiatives that address barriers to doing business, retaining and expanding existing businesses, and incentivizing entrepreneurs and new businesses to be successful, we write to express our support for House Bill 93 and Senate Bill 87, creating an in-state lumber grading program, and House Bill 104, expediting timber sales. The potential for these bills to expand our timber industry is exciting.

The Fairbanks area, and other areas throughout the state, are facing housing shortages, and in the Interior, we pay twice the national average for space heating. Alaska is at the end of the supply chain and our state can and should do more to support and encourage Alaskan businesses to make locally sourced, locally made products to help eliminate our dependence on goods and services from outside the state. More locally sourced wood products can only help. A local lumber grading program and improved resource availability through expedited timber sales would encourage entrepreneurship and expand business opportunities in our community and around the state.

Additionally, the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) supports efforts "to maximize long-term productivity of local biomass for heating and construction materials, to reduce the threat from wildfires, and minimize environmental and community impacts," according to the most recent FNSB Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

The Interior is well positioned to contribute to economic growth in Alaska through sustainable development of our forested lands. Please join us in supporting HB 93 and SB 87, and HB 104. We encourage passage of this legislation this year before the regular session adjourns.

Sincerely,

Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy Johnson".

Jeremy Johnson
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Cotter".

Patrick Cotter
Board Chair

**EXECUTIVE
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Sourdough Fuel/Petro Star
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Stewart Title Company – Yukon Division
Tower Hill Mines-Livengood Gold Project
Vivamore Companies

Co-Chair Bishop,

The AK Forest Association (AFA) is one of Alaska's oldest trade organizations representing a variety of members in the forest products industry in Alaska. AFA's members include small, medium, and large operators, tribal organizations, contractors, industry support organizations, and individuals from across the state of Alaska.

AFA supports HB 104 which will be discussed in the Senate Resources Committee today at 3:30. Due to scheduling conflicts neither the AFA Timber Committee Chair Mr. Clarence Clark, nor I are available to provide testimony during today's discussion.

AFA supports HB 104 for the following reasons:

- The forest products industry supports year-round family wage jobs in AK and our members are AK small business owners. HB 104 allows for continued supply for timber to the industry – which is critical for all components of our membership.
- HB 104 expedites the opportunity for our membership to purchase sales from the Division of Forestry (DoF) without compromising any of the existing processes for public comment and public input.
- The State of AK benefits directly from DoF timber sales in the form of timber receipts. Additionally other state entities such as the Mental Health Trust Land Office (TLO) and the University of AK (UA) administer timber sales programs which directly benefit beneficiary groups and local communities.
- Forest health is the primary concern of AFA member and AK's three forest regions are under attack from insect and disease infestation:
 - Region 1 (Southeast): Hemlock Sawfly & Western Blackheaded Budworm
 - Region 2 (Southcentral): Bark Beetle
 - Region 3 (Interior Boreal): Bark Beetle and Imps bugs
- Diseased forests create hazardous fire danger situations and are associated with fire suppression costs for the State. HB 104 provides the DoF with the ability to expedite measures to ensure forest health, protect AK citizens from fire, and reduce wildland fire protection costs.

I apologize for being unable to attend this afternoon and welcome any questions you may have re: AFA's support for HB 104 or other matters related to our industry.

Regards,

TA

Tessa L. Axelson, MPA

Executive Director

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Serving Alaska's Forest Industry