
From: Amy Seitz <aseitz@alaskafb.org>
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 7:02 AM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Calvin Schrage; Rep. Alyse Galvin; Rep. Sara Hannan; Rep. Nellie Jimmie; Rep. Will Stapp; Rep. Frank Tomaszewski; Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Jeremy Bynum
Subject: EO 136 - Department of Agriculture support
Attachments: LOS_EO136_HFin.pdf

House Finance Committee members,
Attached is a letter from Alaska Farm Bureau supporting EO 136 and the creation of a Department of Agriculture, there's also a list of almost 100 names of people who have signed on to the letter, supporting a Department of Agriculture.

Thank you,
Amy Seitz, Policy Director
Alaska Farm Bureau

Scott Mugrage, President
Scott.Mugrage@yahoo.com



Camron King, Executive Director
cking@alaskafb.org

February 18, 2025

Re: Support for Executive Order 136, Establishing an Alaska Department of Agriculture

House Finance Committee Members:

Alaska Farm Bureau's mission is to improve the economic well-being and expansion of agriculture and to enrich the quality of life for all Alaskans. Our farming and ranching members set our policy positions and priorities based on what is needed to expand our farming and ranching businesses. For decades, Alaska Farm Bureau members have been expressing the need for an Alaska Department of Agriculture. This move would elevate the needs of Alaska's agriculture industry, building programs and services important to growth.

We have potential for a strong agriculture industry that will benefit our state. Alaska is experiencing growth in number of farms, while it's declining nationally. We have a high percentage of new and beginning farmers, as well as attracting farmers from other states; they see our potential here. It's the perfect time to build off the momentum we have with increased consumer demand, market interest and farmers wanting to expand.

This topic should be of importance to everyone, as agriculture does impact everyone. I hope this proposal receives proper consideration and support as agriculture is a viable and important industry to Alaska.

Do we really need a Department of Agriculture?

Yes. Having a cabinet-level seat will help bring issues of our farmers and ranchers to the forefront when policies and budgets are being discussed. Being a division within DNR, agriculture's priorities tend to get pushed to the back, even in years with a Commissioner who values agriculture, it does not receive the focus the agriculture industry needs.

Having a higher-level office will also assist greatly in developing markets. A commissioner will be able to build relations and have ongoing conversations with larger markets (grocery stores, state institutions, and export for some products) promoting the benefits of Alaska Grown. It has not been easy for our farmers to navigate these larger markets on their own, and it is these markets that are needed to significantly expand our agriculture industry.

Why now?

This is a step that is long overdue. Had a Department of Agriculture been established years ago, helping to expand production, perhaps our grocery store shelves would have been more stable getting through COVID, and all the other disruption that result in empty

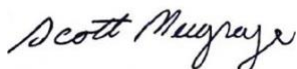
shelves. The agriculture industry could be a larger contributor to the state's food security and economy; increased production, attracting more support businesses, providing more jobs. We can't change the past, and we can't guarantee what the future will bring. Establishing a department now will start to build stability and capacity in the programs and services that help our farmers and ranchers. Starting a Department of Agriculture now, we can capitalize off the momentum we have. Growth in the agriculture industry will increase food security, diversify the state's economy and make us less dependent on the supply chain.

Why is this proposal only adding administration?

While, on paper, it may look like this proposal is just "growing government" and only adding administration, these positions will help increase capacity and bring more clout to our agriculture industry. As mentioned before, a commissioner and deputy commissioner will assist with reaching larger markets. Administrative and IT staff will help take some of the workload off program staff so they can focus more on developing resources for our farmers and ranchers. This will also build capacity to seek funding sources outside of state dollars. We see this as a fiscally responsible way to stand up a Department of Agriculture and start building a better support system to grow Alaska's agriculture industry.

The Alaska Farm Bureau strongly supports Executive Order 136, establishing the Alaska Department of Agriculture. We know there are some with concerns around this proposal; growing government, increasing spending, and even questioning if there should be state resources to help Alaska's farmers and ranchers. Alaska agriculture is an industry that has huge potential, and, as with any industry, state support is necessary to more quickly and fully realize our potential. We appreciate the work that has gone into this proposal, and hope for the support to let it pass.

Respectfully,



Scott Mugrage, President
Alaska Farm Bureau

Below are additional signers to the above letter, adding their names in agreement and supporting the need for an Alaska Department of Agriculture.

Anne Aleshire	Fairbanks
Andrea Snow	Fairbanks
Cliff Krug	Seward
Allison Gaylord	Homer
David Austin	Fairbanks
Jacob Tucker	Delta Junction
Michele struck	Delta Junction
Jonathan Clapeck	North Pole
Summer Nay	Delta Junction
Jonathan Skinner	Fairbanks
Bernie Karl	Fairbanks
Charles Bingham	Sitka
Paula Williams	Anchorage
Michael Williams	Anchorage
Charlie Jeannet	Fairbanks
Jesika Harper	Spokane, WA
Scott Faulkner	North Pole
Arron Atchley	Tok
Valerie Tompkins	Chugiak
Dylan Blankenship	Wasilla
Stasha Kalugin	Nikolaevsk
Taylor Wilson	Wasilla
Richard P Wilson	Anchorage
Barbara Dahl	Kenai
Melina Regoord	Anchorage
Victoria Bush	Palmer
Gregory Kalal	Anchorage
Robbie Shepherd	Wasilla
Ronald Illingworth	North Pole
Julie Riley	Fairbanks
Karl Jewett	Healy
Chris Devine	Anchorage
Deborah Anderson	Homer
Patricia Griswold	Delta Junction
Bryce Wrigley	Delta Junction
Elana White	Kodiak
Jeremy Manz	Homer

Kenneth Hoffman	Palmer
Curtis Knight	Fairbanks
Julia Mugrage	Delta Junction
John Dart	North Pole
LaTasha Jensen	North Pole
Tony Baca	Fairbanks
Lisa Humphrey	Fairbanks
Ray Hander	Fairbanks
Malena Dote	Fairbanks
Mac Hinman	Fairbanks
Kathleen Hipp	Fairbanks
Kirsten Brune	Fairbanks
Clarence Goward	Fairbanks
Berry McDavid	Denali Borough
Chris Haner	Fairbanks
Bob Mayberry	Fairbanks
Ron Templeton	North Pole
John West	Fairbanks
Dave McGee	Fairbanks
Rebecca Gonzalez	Fairbanks
Russell Williams	Fairbanks
Richard Timothy Dote	Fairbanks
Andy Harper	Fairbanks
Russell X Williams	Fairbanks
Jeremiah Marlow	North Pole
Gerald Marlow	North Pole
Dwayne Hofschulte	Eielson Farm Rd
Irene Wood	Fairbanks
Eda Jewett	Healy
Megan Merritt	Sterling
Hali Holt	Kenai
Mara Jennings	Kenai
Martha Merry	Soldotna
Deborah Reichard	Soldotna
Amber Katzenberger	Sterling
Jeanette Pedginski	Soldotna
Carol Marsh	Kasilof
Ameye Carpenter	Kenai
Katy Jones	Homer
Marcia Knowlton	Soldotna
Phil Kaspari	Delta Junction
Jon Dufendach	Delta Junction
Carol Dufendach	Delta Junction
Paul Knopp	Delta Junction
Julia Walker	Delta Junction
Steve Sorensen	Delta Junction
Wanda Sorensen	Delta Junction

Denise Wilhelm	Delta Junction
Lloyd Wilhelm	Delta Junction
Brandon Elkins	Delta Junction
Allen Struck	Delta Junction
Milo Wrigley	Delta Junction
Adam Griswold	Delta Junction
Nate Griswold	Delta Junction
Linda Spears	Delta Junction

From: Brad K Kimberlin [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 09, 2025 9:17 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: Department of Agriculture

Good day

As a resident of rural Alaska operating a small independent farm Alaska Gold Apiary a honey producer and Bee rearing operation in an historical farming community Kenny Lake. We are pretty excited to see The upcoming change in the status of our agricultural program there are many small farmers working on sustainability. And not being reliant on imports from the lower 48 it's my belief that an Alaska state department of agriculture can further the growth of Alaska producers

Thank you Brad Kimberlin

From: Will Hastings <sandhillfarmsak@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 03, 2025 11:02 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee; House Finance
Subject: Please Support Executive Order 136: Establishment of Department of Agriculture

To the Senate & House Finance Committees:

Good Day. My name is Will Hastings. I live off of Schrock Road and my wife and I own Sandhill Farms LLC. We raise hay and root crops for animal feed (we supply root crops to 4T% Ranch on the Kenai Peninsula). We started farming in 2021, after I finished working on the Slope and before that, 20 years in the US Air Force. I can tell you, moving into farming has been challenging. And it was immediately more challenging when I realized my state entity (the Div of Ag) was below the Department of Natural Resources.

Please support the establishment of a Department of Agriculture. Every state that takes agriculture seriously has a Department of Agriculture. The current structure whereby the Division of Ag is under the Department of Natural Resources inherently places a level of bureaucracy separating the agricultural industry of Alaska from the Legislature and The Governor. The Department of Natural Resource is primarily focused on oil and gas, mining, and other industries. Agriculture is a unique industry with unique difficulties, setting it apart from any other economic endeavor. Right now, there are impediments to increasing the agricultural industry in Alaska. For me to advocate to improve these conditions, I must first convince the Division of AG and then that person must convince the Department of Natural Resource, before it can go to the governor. The legislature faces the same hurdles, if you want to advocate an agricultural issue. Why is it, for instance, that Alaska does not have a system in place to encourage "custom farming activities", whereby I can use my equipment, on someone else's land, to be used to produce hay for their own purposes? If I were to do that today, I would be uninsured and be required to do the task for free. It is common for a wheat farmer in the Lower 48 to contract out a "custom cuttter" to bring their combine to his land and harvest his wheat, due the high expense for the farmer to own his own combine. Why is it that Alaska does not have intellectual property protections for Alaskan agricultural producers developing new products and processes? Other states have these abilities and hence, their agricultural industries thrive. The Department of Agriculture could bring Alaskan Ag into the 21st century by being able to take these types of issues and advocate to the Governor and Legislature, without having to first argue the points to the Dept of Natural Resources.

Please support this new Department and let's begin to wean ourselves from the necessity to import 95-99% of our food.

Thank You,
Will & Beth Hastings
Owners, Sandhill Farms LLC
97 E New Field Drive
Wasilla, AK, 99654
907-854-6950

From: David Van Den Berg <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, March 01, 2025 2:18 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee; House Finance
Subject: Department of Agriculture

Dear Legislators

Please create this Department of Agriculture. Let's make hay from climate change by getting our lands in order to produce food and materials for value-added economies and a higher prospect of some self-sufficiency. Every state developed from an agricultural base and it's incredible that Alaska has limped along for decades without a tool like its own DEPARTMENT of Agriculture.

You won't need to create Rep Holland's Department of Entrepreneurship since a growing Agricultural sector will have niches aplenty for entrepreneurs.

David van den Berg
[REDACTED]
Fairbanks, AK 99701