

Alaska State Legislature

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REPRESENTATIVE PAUL SEATON Rep.Paul.Seaton@akleg.gov

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 386: Vessels: Registration/Titles; Derelicts

The state of Alaska is home to aging vessels that are moored or deposited in Alaska harbors, shorelines and in State tidelands. Many of these vessels have fallen into ill repair, leading to their abandonment in the area waters of Alaska. HB 386 will provide through the Department of Administration and Department of Natural Resources a clear management method to stop the accumulation of more derelict and abandoned vessels. The state of Alaska, its municipalities and ultimately Alaska citizens will be accountable for these derelict and abandoned vessels, without legislative action.

A report titled *Trends and Opportunities in the Alaska Maritime Industrial Support Sector* by McDowell Group, Inc. (2014) indicates that Alaska waters are home to over 9,400 vessels with approximately 6% of these vessels being 50 years or older. This report states, “Many vessels in the fleet are nearing the end of their useful life. By 2025, the Alaska fleet will include roughly 3,100 vessels ... that are more than 45 years old.” Current State regulations for disposal and cleanup of these aging vessels contain “no teeth”. There is no State change of ownership tracking system for vessels. Derelict vessels present navigation and environmental hazards; disposal falls to the State or local municipalities without financial means to recover costs.

HB 386 outlines a process for abatement of these derelict vessels, while balancing the public's rights with that of vessel ownership.

- It brings in line the ownership of a vessel to that of other motor vehicles through the Department of Administration; requiring a title, registration and vehicle number.
- Department of Natural Resources, subject to appropriation, shall establish and administer a derelict vessel prevention program.
- It will update and increase fines upon conviction of unlawful abandonment of a vessel.
- It provides due process to a vessel owner with notices and hearings prior to impoundment and prior to disposal.
- It provides a nominal increase in State registration fees and enacts a requirement and fee for State vessel titles.

In summary, HB 386 takes an important step toward responsible vessel ownership to address the current and future derelict vessel issue in Alaska.

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