

March 27, 2025

Re: Support of House Bill 136

To: Representative Kevin McCabe, Bill Sponsor
Transportation Committee Co-Chairs Rep. Ashley Carrick and Rep. Ted Eischeid

Thank you for making time to work on House Bill 136. With its passage hopefully it will start righting decades of overreach committed by the Alaska Railroad.

An employee of the Alaska Railroad once told us, "The Alaska Railroad is a real estate company that runs a toy train." The Alaska Railroad makes the majority of its wealth from land leases; not from actually running a profitable railroad.

Unfortunately, citizens along the railroad, many whose land was privately owned before the railroad even existed, have been under unreasonable expectations and rules.

Although we have not been directly affected by right-of-way issues, my wife and I are second generation owners of a few acres of private land that utilizes a single private crossing, over the current railroad right-of-way, to access our home. Historical documents are not absolute but do suggest that the original homesteader was in residence prior to the railroad existence. We write a small check every month to the ARR so we can drive across the tracks utilizing the crossing that my father built and paid for. (The ARR will not allow us to pay annually, as their issue is that they want us to sign a new contract that is completely unreasonable both financially and because of various requirements they include; the same contract would be used for a large corporate, industrial user. Even our national insurance company said that it would be untenable to have such a contract.)

We maintain the crossing — continually plowing and trimming and cleaning of the railroad's construction debris — being the best possible neighbors to the railroad, and we always have pleasant dealings with the local crew who actually work on the tracks.

Please pass HR136 so the good citizens along the rail line can start to be treated in a more equitable way and The Alaska Railroad can start to gain back its reputation in being a good neighbor. The Alaska Railroad can be a beneficial part of Alaskan life and economy but not as the strong-armed legal bully it has become.

Thank you for your service.

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