

Alaska Historical Society



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The Honorable Gary Stevens
Alaska State Capitol, Room 111
Juneau, Alaska 99801

February 13, 2023

Dear Senator Stevens:

On behalf of the 430+ members of the Alaska Historical Society, congratulations on your re-election as Senator and your position as Senate President. As Alaska's only statewide historic association dedicated to the preservation and promotion of our state's history, we look forward to working with you on several of our priorities this year.

One of these priorities is support for your Senate Bill 29, relating to civics education. We are pleased to help with passage of this legislation. We are currently developing a series of lectures to promote civic discourse around several topics such as "The Americanization of Alaska," "Sovereignty and Equality," "Climate Change Impacts in Alaska," and "Development and Conservation." We also will be tracking budgets for state archives, museums, historic preservation, and university history programs to ensure these programs continue to receive the financial support they need to remain high quality.

An additional priority issue is support for Alaska participation in the national celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the US Declaration of Independence in 2026-27. Congress has established the non-partisan U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission and many states have created their own state commissions, but Alaska has not yet done so. We believe the existing Alaska Historical Commission, established by statute, would be the most efficient organization to take the lead on this effort, although it will need additional resources to do so. We have reached out to Lt. Gov. Nancy Dahlstrom, the Commission's chair, to bring her up to speed on this initiative.

Although Alaska was not a state in 1776, we believe this event would provide an unprecedented opportunity for Alaskans to explore and inform our fellow Americans of Alaska's history in the context of the history of our nation. This should include our rich and diverse population, in particular Alaska's Native peoples with their millennia of history and culture; how Alaska serves as a gateway for American membership in the Arctic; played a significant role in the Allied victory in World War II through the Lend-Lease program; led the nation in recognizing basic civil rights for all Alaskans; and through an historic land claims settlement helped make Alaska Natives among the most powerful indigenous peoples in the world.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these topics at your convenience.

Sincerely,

David Ramseur
President