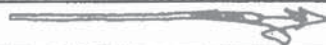




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March 23, 2015

Representative Neal Foster,
House of Representatives
State of Alaska

Via email

Neal

Dear Representative Foster:

On behalf of Kawerak, Inc., the regional tribal consortium in the Bering Strait Region, thank you for introducing HB 142, "An Act establishing Elders' Day".

One of the unique things about our great state of Alaska is that we recognize and honor the hard work, ingenuity, and wisdom of our elders, who have paved the way for us in many ways. Alaska Natives especially hold elders in high regard for passing on the knowledge of our ancestors, which has allowed us to live and thrive in one of the harshest climates in the world. Additionally, we have elders to thank for leading the way to statehood, creating infrastructure in our vast state, and laying the foundation for Alaska to sustain its bountiful natural resources, among other things.

Elders should be honored and treasured each day, but just as we recognize mothers and fathers on Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day, respectively, so too should our elders be acknowledged on a special day designated for this. By the Alaska State Legislature establishing an official day to recognize elders, it sends a message to the general population, especially our youth, that elders are to be revered and treasured.

Kawerak supports this bill and encourages the Alaska Legislature to pass it; it is non-partisan and non-controversial. I invite you ahead of time to participate in our region's planning efforts to celebrate the first official "Elder's Day"!

Sincerely,

KAWERAK, INCORPORATED

Melanie Bahnke

Melanie Bahnke, President