



KODIAK HISTORICAL SOCIETY & BARANOV MUSEUM

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Senator Gary Stevens
Alaska State Capitol
Room 429
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Stevens:

I am contacting you today to express the Kodiak Historical Society and Baranov Museum's **support for Senate Bill 7, establishing a museum construction grant program**. A 2014 McDowell Group survey for the Foraker Group demonstrates critical infrastructure needs for our cultural institutions that care for and exhibit Alaskan collections. Many of the buildings our Museums are in were never meant to be used as museums or cultural centers, are over 50 years old, and have deferred maintenance needs that surpass operating budgets of the institutions.

Museums and cultural organizations in Alaska are a critical part of the educational and economic infrastructure, spurring tourism and partnering with schools to teach the local curriculum. Despite the vital role of museums, our facilities and collections are at risk through decreasing federal, local and charitable giving. As collection grows and visitation increases, the pressure on our aging infrastructure must be managed. This bill would establish an effective framework to support current and growing capital needs of Alaskan museums as state and local economies improve and capital funding becomes available.

The Baranov Museum is no stranger to this trend. We opened with centennial funds in 1967. Though we have been lucky enough to receive needed funding to care for our building, originally built by the Russian-American Company in 1808 and the oldest building in Alaska, we do need funding for an exhibit renovation project. Our current exhibits were developed piecemeal over the last 50 years and are reflective of an older museums aesthetic which no longer adequately communicates Kodiak's rich history. Thanks to federal, state and private funding, we've been able to develop an exhibit design plan, but we need further support to construct the new permanent exhibits. Doing so would help us better use the incredible resources of our buildings and the collections built up over the last 50 years to share Kodiak's history with residents and visitors.

I thank you for your sponsorship of Senate Bill 7, establishing a museum construction grant program, so that museums throughout the state of Alaska may continue to serve their communities. The board and staff of the Kodiak Historical Society greatly appreciate and support your efforts.

Sincerely,

Tiffany K. Brunson
Executive Director
Kodiak Historical Society & Baranov Museum