



## Greater Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce

2417 Tongass Ave., Ste. 223A  
Ketchikan, AK 99901

**Representative Dan Ortiz  
State Capitol Rm 114  
Juneau, AK 99801**

**January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

### **Subject: Support from the Greater Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce Regarding House Bill 18**

Representative Ortiz, and members of the Alaska State Legislature.

The purpose of this letter is to express the Greater Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce's support for passage of House Bill 18, regarding Race Classics.

The Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce represents over 200 members, and is dedicated to developing a sustainable and prosperous business environment which supports economic vitality, and quality of life and community well-being in the greater Ketchikan region.

In 2015, Ketchikan was surprised to find itself the finish line of an exciting new unpowered boat race, the Race to Alaska, or R2AK. R2AK participants make a 750 mile journey from Port Townsend, WA to Ketchikan, AK in unpowered vessels. The first team to finish wins \$10,000. The second team, a set of steak knives!

The Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce is seeking to raise funds for local community projects, and to increase the excitement surrounding the R2AK, by starting a new community guessing game fundraiser similar to the Nenana Ice Classic. Participants would guess the time the first contestant completes the race, and the person coming closest to the actual time would win a cash prize. The proceeds of this fundraiser would be used by the Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce for special activities such as community projects, economic development programs, helping to grow a new scholarship fund, and more.

After conducting a good deal of research, we have determined that specific legislative authorization is necessary. HB-18 gives the Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce permission to conduct a charitable community fundraiser of this type, based around the Race to Alaska, by including this event within the State's existing definition of "race classics." HB-18 specifies that this event would be administered by the Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce.

The tradition of "classics" is a fun and common form of Alaskana. A great many non-profit entities throughout Alaska have been given permission by the legislature to conduct "classic" fundraisers of this type. There are currently race classics, dog mushers' classics, rain classics, fish derbies, moose derbies, and even goose and canned salmon classics.

There is strong precedent for Chamber of Commerce organizations to host events of this type. Similar events are hosted by the Chamber of Commerce organizations for Juneau, Fairbanks, Kenai, Seward, Petersburg, Delta, and Big Lake.

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The benefits of HB 18 to our organization and community would include:

- Provides a new source of self-generated revenue for community projects which otherwise would not be present.
- Supports community and economic development activities.
- Helps get Alaskans excited about contributing to community projects and initiatives
- A form of traditional Alaskan which adds to the fun and excitement of the event!
- Does not cost the State anything, but creates a new source for funding community initiatives.

While this may seem a relatively modest request, it is none-the-less important and meaningful to our community. With State and local government funding decreasing, and with funding for non-profit and community activities declining every year, every new source of revenue for community projects is extremely meaningful.

We know that the members of Alaska’s legislature have very challenging decisions ahead during this session. We thank you for taking the time to consider our request for what we believe is a relatively small (albeit necessary) administrative change, requiring legislative approval.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*William Swift*

William Swift

Executive Director, Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce

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