

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ZACK FIELDS

Fairview • South Addition • Government Hill • Downtown • Eastridge

House Bill 96

The State of Alaska Pioneer Homes are an important pillar of senior care in the Last Frontier. Officially established in the years after statehood, our founding fathers recognized the need to provide long term care for our elders as they aged.

I am introducing legislation to keep the Pioneer Homes affordable and keep our commitment to our seniors. In 1913 the Territory of Alaska established homes for indigent pioneers, recognizing the lack of basic care available for our earliest elders. These were then expanded over the course of the next 100 years to meet the demand of caring for our aging pioneers. These seniors, many of whom spent a lifetime in dangerous occupations as they established our state-with little infrastructure and with little means to care for them as they aged.

Often, senior care-including assisted living-is prohibitively expensive. This cost is a barrier for many families as they struggle with the needs of loved ones who are aging. Thus, our Pioneer Homes are an important part of senior care in a state that is geographically widespread and sparsely populated.

This bill will ensure care at Alaska's Pioneer Homes remains affordable and prevents seniors from becoming indigent. Our seniors have spent a lifetime helping establish an Alaska where quality of life is important, and where it is a place that their grandkids would want to live, work and play- and we should do our part to help them have a good quality of life as they age.