



ALASKA DISTRICT COUNCIL OF LABORERS

Laborers' International Union of North America

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March 25, 2019

The Honorable Andy Josephson and Chris Tuck

Alaska State House of Representatives

Juneau, AK 99801

Sent via email: Representative.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov;
Representative.Chris.Tuck@akleg.gov

Re: HB 30 Worker Compensation Benefits for Death Cases & PPI
Injuries

Dear Representatives Josephson and Tuck:

Because HB 30 would improve the inadequate death benefits for families of workers killed on the job and the benefits for workers suffering permanent injuries, the Alaska District Council of Laborers strongly supports this legislation.

HB 30 corrects the embarrassing neglect of prior Legislatures to update the death benefit for cases when the worker was single, yet had grandchildren, parents, or siblings dependent on them. For over 50 years—since 1968—this death benefit has languished at the insulting \$20,000 for the loss of human life. Sadly, a number of Alaska families have been subject to this insulting statute. For example, the families of the following Alaskans sadly received this outdated, substandard \$20,000 for an on-the-job death: (1) Kerry Brookman who was killed by an avalanche while working for the AKRR; (2) Tyler Kahle, a construction worker killed in Nome; and (3) Anchorage Laborer Samuel Damm who was killed by a truck. The bill also corrects the lack of a death benefit for workplace deaths when the accident involves a worker without children, a spouse, or dependents.

Second, the bill corrects an outdated statute that unfairly impacts Alaskans disabled from workplace accidents. Specifically, the worker compensation amount for a permanent disability in AS 23.30.190 has not been adjusted since the year 2000—and thus has eroded by inflation. Depending on the affected body part, the level of PPI benefits in Alaska

places us around the 30th percentile compared with other states. HB 30 resolves this inequity for injured Alaskans.

We appreciate your work on this important legislation to support Alaska workers and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.J. Merrick II". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "A" and "J".

A.J. "Joey" Merrick II

CC: House Labor & Commerce Committee