



February 21, 2020

To: The Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capital
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Elected Officials

I am writing this letter in support of Senate Bill 101, to establish March 12th as Ashley Johnson-Barr Day. A Bill sponsored by Senator Donny Olson.

As a resident of Kotzebue, Alaska, and now its current Mayor, I wanted to show my support for Senate Bill 101. The tragic event that took place here is still fresh in the minds of Kotzebue Residents. As our community goes through the grief process it is important to look for silver linings or anything positive that come from great loss. When we see tragedy in the news it is common to hear how people banded together to support one-another, how our public servants risked their lives to save others, and how a community plans to rise up and survive.

Never in my life have I seen this idea flourish with such overwhelming support and selflessness of the people. As the days of searching for Ashley went on, more and more people came to help. Law enforcement from the State and Federal levels offered their services to greatly expand our limited resources. Communities across the Great State of Alaska held vigils and rallies to support the family and bring attention to our missing little girl. As the search continued and when most would lose hope, or the media buzz would dwindle, the word that Ashley was still missing continued to spread across the nation and even across the oceans.

The news of Ashly's death didn't just break the hearts of her family and friends. That break was felt in the hearts of every Kotzebue resident, everyone in the Northwest Arctic Region, all Alaskans, and by many around the world. When looking for the sliver lining in this tragedy, I see only one; but it is massive. People from all walks of life coming together to support a little girl named Ashley.

My hope is that establishing Ashley Johnson-Barr Day will be a reminder of how humanity can come together, show compassion for one-another, even those they have never met, and reinforce the idea that there is so much more good in this world than bad.

Lewis J. Pagel
Mayor of Kotzebue