



March 2, 2020

Submitted electronically

Re: Support for Senate Bill 155, an act relating to mining rights

Dear Co-Chair von Imhof, Co-Chair Stedman and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

The Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce supports efforts to simplify and improve mining policy in the state of Alaska. The Interior of Alaska has had a long and rich history with the mining industry. It was mining that was the impetus that created Fairbanks and mining continues to be a large contributor to the economy of the Interior. The mining industry has for many years provided good paying jobs to the residents of the Interior.

The process of identifying and maintaining mining claims has become a process of ambiguity that has been costly to both the State and mine operators. With some interpretations of current laws and regulations by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), it has led to confusion by operators, and in some cases put them at risk of losing legitimate claims. Under the current process by State DNR there is little to no opportunity, prior to a notice of abandonment, to correct a clerical error that may have no substance. Yet, the clerical error puts the claim at risk, and may be very difficult or costly to correct.

As currently drafted, Senate Bill 155 will provide a means to better identify ownership of mining claims including trusts that have not previously been recognized as a legitimate owner of a mining claim. Within the Bill there is also language that puts into statute a means that better clarifies (MTRSC) meridian, township, range, section and claim system of identifying claims which will help alleviate confusion and better identify claim ownership. SB155 also provides an owner of a federal claim a means to convert federal claims to state claims without risk of losing their rights. This in itself is a significant step in relieving the bottle neck that currently exists with conveyance of mining claims currently held in federal claims to state. Further, the legislation puts labor affidavit requirements clearly in statute,

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updates lists of qualifying work to further claims, and clarifies that cash payments can be made for no more than five consecutive years, ensuring an attempt is made to develop the claim.

The legislation has been a collaborative effort between the mining industry and the State Department of Natural Resources to update and provide clarity to some of the mining laws. This has been a priority of the mining industry for many years and will provide a reasonable means to correct errors in maintenance of mining claims, and to provide clarity and direction to DNR and to industry.

Senate Bill 155 provides the tools and establishes the law necessary for DNR to properly manage the claims processes. The Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance of laws that protect the individuals and corporations to their rightful ownership to mining claims. As SB155 is currently written, it provides much clarity and direction to DNR and also claim holders and also assures prospective mining claim holders that may have interest in Alaska that their interest would be protected through laws that are clear and there are policies and directions written in law that protect both the State and the claim holder.

The Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce represents over 700 business members throughout Interior Alaska. We work to advocate for the best business environment, promote economic strength and growth for interior Alaska, and to develop the resources and networks enterprising people use to share knowledge.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these important changes.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marisa Sharrah".

Marisa Sharrah
President/CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sabrina Binkley".

Sabrina Binkley
Board Chair