

Hello Mr. Lamkin,

I am Anita Laulainen. I am the winner of the inaugural Alaska Artistic License Plate Competition. In 2017, at the time of winning, I was a senior at the University of Alaska Anchorage. Winning the competition was an incredible experience. As a soon-to-be college graduate, I intended to stay in Alaska to find a position as a designer in Anchorage. To have just been awarded this honor, especially within Alaska, gave my portfolio a prestigious item to present at interviews. The cash prize was a great benefit as well, as it contributed to the purchase of new art supplies and technology to continue creating art.

The greatest benefit, however, has been keeping the rights to the art featured on the plate. At the time of winning, I was informed I retained the rights, but did not know what this truly meant. Years passed, and as the plate became more popular, I began to witness numerous items featuring the design with someone else's copyright appear on shelves in Walmart, and other sellers doing something similar online. I realized then that if I wanted to maintain ownership of the design I had to be proactive about producing my own merchandise and preventing others from using my art without my permission.

Following this decision then led to months of effort and work to formally register the design with the US Copyright office, research and strategize how to approach individuals and companies producing items with the design without my permission, and then how I myself could eventually create a partnership with a manufacturer or marketing company to create my own merchandise. I did all of this on my own, using my own money to pay fees.

Fast forwarding to present day, I have established a partnership with a local marketing company to produce a number of items featuring the license plate design, with my copyright clearly marked on each item. They have partnerships with local stores that sell souvenirs-like tourist shops, local Walmarts and local Targets-and I receive quarterly royalty checks based on these sales. I also purchase stock directly from them to sell on my own personal website. Additionally, I am working directly with them to design even more items that will be manufactured and produced featuring the license plate art.

Witnessing the sheer amount of local Alaskans who have purchased the plate and being able to sell items featuring the design has been a tremendously rewarding experience. I am still in awe to this day of the popularity of the design and still cannot fully comprehend how much of an impact this license plate has had throughout the state and the attention it has given to the local art community. This honor has also led to additional art and design opportunities that would not have come about had I not won this competition. I can say with confidence that it will continue to have a positive impact on my career and business ventures for years to come.

With that said, I am fully in support of SB71 so that the Artistic License Plate Program can continue to support and lift local artists-both in terms of advancing their careers and businesses and by putting a spotlight on the local artist community.

Thank you,  
Anita  
Anita Laulainen

[www.laulainenarts.com](http://www.laulainenarts.com)