



# Senator Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki

Alaska State Senate

District P Fairbanks

SB 218

## Sponsor Statement

“An Act relating to vehicle weight limits; and providing for an effective date.”

Senate Bill No. 218 establishes a weight limit of 140,000 pounds for vehicles or groups of vehicles on the highway without a permit. To obtain a permit for a vehicle to exceed this weight, the requestor must pay a fee issued by the Alaska State Department of Transportation. The purpose of these fees would be to offset the costs of routine road and bridge maintenance, as well as administrative costs to issue permits.

According to Alaska Policy Forum, Alaska currently has the second to worst highways in the United States, only outranking the State of New Jersey. Cost of materials and labor, extreme geography and unpredictable weather conditions make Alaska’s highways the most expensive in the country to maintain; the State pays approximately \$129,620 per vehicle mile traveled (VMT)—twenty five percent more than the runner up, West Virginia. The average VMT expenditure for the United States is \$28,289—roughly 22% of Alaska’s VMT expenditure.

Most states rely heavily on gasoline and license taxes, tolls and user fees to maintain their highways, with Hawaii being ranked #1 at 71.0-73.4% of these funds allocated to maintaining their roads. Alaska, however, is ranked #50 at 5.7-12.7% of these funds covering highway maintenance expenses. Our state relies primarily on federal funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), in addition to funding implemented into the State’s budget by the Governor and passed by the legislature each year. This funding is a finite resource and is stretched thin as it is.

In addition to having roads that are expensive and difficult to maintain, Alaska’s highways are infamous for how dangerous they are. The Seward Highway is infamous for its narrow and winding roads and the plethora of car accidents that occur as a result. The Dalton Highway is known as “the loneliest road in America” due to the lack of stops and services along the 414-mile road. The Richardson Highway’s lack of exposure to sunlight in the winter months makes for a treacherous journey. For these reasons alone, we need to take the necessary steps to make our highways safer and more cost-efficient to maintain. We ask for your support of Senate Bill 218.