



The Alaska Committee
3030 Vintage Blvd. Suite 100 • Juneau AK 99802
(907)463-3488

March 7, 2024
Representative CJ McCormick, Chair
House Community & Regional Affairs

Re: House Bill 5

Representative McCormick, Committee Members:

The mission of the Alaska Committee is to enhance Juneau as Alaska's Capital City, so it can effectively and efficiently host the Legislature as well as provide better access to the State Capital for all Alaskans. Towards that end, the community of Juneau has invested millions of dollars to improve facilities, infrastructure, and constituent access.

We do not believe that moving legislative sessions to Anchorage as envisioned in HB5 will improve access for most Alaskans. Nor will it prove to be less expensive.

Separating the legislative branch of government from the state capital and duplicating the facilities and technology needed for legislative sessions will be very costly. Inefficiencies will arise with unnecessary travel by state officials residing in the capital city that are required to physically interact with the Legislature.

When legislative hearings or sessions have occasionally been held in Anchorage, personal constituent interaction with the Legislature or hearing attendance did not increase. In fact, many constituents living in or near Anchorage chose to participate in other ways instead of appearing in person.

Our polling and surveys continue to indicate that most constituents prefer to contact their legislator by phone, email, or text – not in person. They prefer to monitor legislative action and hearings through TV and Internet access, which is far more convenient, efficient, and less costly than driving or flying to visit the Legislature.

For this reason, the Alaska Committee and the community of Juneau remain committed to increasing access through better technology that benefits all Alaskans, not just those who live near where legislative sessions are held.

In conjunction with Juneau's local public television station, KTOO, the Alaska Committee inaugurated Gavel Alaska's live, unedited coverage of the state legislature including senate and house floor sessions, press conferences, and other legislative events. Gavel Alaska also broadcasts and streams the Alaska Supreme Court, administrative press conference, briefings, and other state government activities taking place in the state capital of Juneau.

During the height of the pandemic, connecting greater Alaska to the happenings at the Capitol was of the utmost importance. In 2020, Gavel Alaska embarked on an approximate million-dollar project to outfit the state capital building with 39 new robotic cameras, new fiber optic transmission cable, and HD video production equipment to ensure that high quality broadcast signals and streams were available to all Alaskans via their cable provider, internet, or the Alaska Rural Communications System (ARCS). These upgrades ensured that the Alaska Legislature remained accessible in a "socially distanced" context. This project also allowed Gavel Alaska to provide high quality streams of three concurrent state government events, a service that is still being provided to the state.

Today, Gavel Alaska receives no state funding for operations and the community of Juneau remains its primary financial sponsor.

As broadband access expands in Alaska, Gavel Alaska will continue to prioritize access to the state legislature by developing modern technologies. A recently launched Roku TV app in 2022 and an Apple TV app in January 2023 has broadened Gavel Alaska's reach even more. The number of downloads, users, and overall usage of these apps spiked during the 2023 legislative session and continues to grow this year.

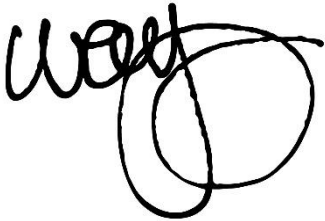
Technology, not new buildings or relocated buildings, will be the key to providing real access to constituents. As it continues to evolve and provide us with solutions undreamed of just a few years ago, the Legislature and state government will continue to reach significantly more people than just those few who have the time or inclination to visit Alaska's capital.

For the Committee's file, I have enclosed copies of the history of capital and legislative move efforts as well as various related ballot issues.

House Bill 5 will resurrect a long-fought battle with few winners, only benefiting one region of the state at the expense of another. Alaska has so many challenges facing it today; why spend scarce resources on an issue this divisive when technology can achieve greater access at a fraction of the cost?

Thank you for your consideration and your service to the State of Alaska.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne Jensen". The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive, with the first name "Wayne" written in a larger, more prominent font than the last name "Jensen".

Wayne Jensen, Chair
Alaska Committee
info@alaskacommittee.com

ENC:
Capital Move History
A Brief History of Capital Moves

MOVING THE CAPITAL

A History of Ballot Measures

| ELECTION DATE | PROPOSED BY | BALLOT TITLE AND SUMMARY | VOTES FOR | VOTES AGAINST |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|---------------|
| 8/9/60 Primary Election | Initiative Ballot Measure #1 | "Moving Capital to Cook Inlet - Railbelt Area" It is proposed that on and after January 1, 1965, the Capital of the State of Alaska, which is by Section 20 of Article XV of the State Constitution located in Juneau, be relocated within the Cook Inlet-Railbelt area. The exact location within this area is to be selected by a committee of five to be appointed by the Governor. | 18,865 | 23,972 |
| 11/6/62 General Election | Initiative Ballot Measure #1 | "Relocating the Capital in Western Alaska" Proposed, that the Capital of Alaska be relocated in Western Alaska, to a site not within thirty miles of Anchorage. A committee of senior senators from each senatorial district shall select not more than three locations, consisting of not less than 6400 acres of state lands. They shall consider accessibility by road, railroad, airline service and terrain necessary for airport construction. From the locations selected the site shall be chosen by plurality vote of the people. The Legislature shall immediately thereafter provide for planning and construction of necessary state facilities. Movement of the capital shall begin before June 1, 1968. | 26,542 | 32,325 |
| 8/27/74 Primary Election | Initiative Ballot Measure #1 | "Relocating and Constructing a New Capital" This initiative bill calls for construction of a new Alaskan capital city at one of two or three sites nominated by a selection committee appointed by the Governor. Each site must include at least 100 square miles of donated and public land, in Western Alaska at least thirty miles from Anchorage and Fairbanks. The final selection will be made, after a committee report and hearings, by plurality vote in a general election. Construction must allow movement of offices to begin by October 1, 1980. Funding for committee activity and construction of capital facilities is to be provided by the Legislature. | 46,659 | 35,683 |
| 11/2/76 General Election | Ballot Measure | "Capital Site Selection" The capital site selection committee has selected three potential capital sites which are set out below. The law provides that the qualified voters of the State are entitled to vote for one of the alternate capital sites selected by the committee and that the site receiving the greatest number of votes shall be the site of the new capital city of Alaska. | Larson Lake - 33,170 Mount Yenlo - 16,169 Willow - 56,219 | |
| 11/7/78 General Election | Initiative Ballot Measure #3 | "Full Bondable Costs of Relocating Capital" This proposal would require that all costs of the capital relocation be determined. All costs include: moving personnel and offices to the relocation site; planning, building, furnishing, | 69,414 | 55,253 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|----------------|----------------|
| | | using and financing a new capital having facilities equal to those at the current capital and those required by the 1974 capital move initiative; and the social, economic and environmental impact to the present and relocation sites. In addition, it would require that a bond issue including all bondable costs of capital relocation be approved by a majority of voters prior to the expenditure of state money to relocate the capital. | | |
| 11/7/78 General Election | Bonding Proposition #10 Ch. 157 SLA 1978 | "State General Obligation New State Capital Construction Bonds \$966,000,000" Shall the State of Alaska issue its general obligation bonds in the principal amount of not more than \$966,000,000 for the purpose of paying the costs of capital improvements for the new state capital? | 31,491 | 88,783 |
| 11/2/82 General Election | Ballot Proposition #8 CS HB603(FIN) | "Relocation of the State Capital" This proposition asks: Considering the cost, revenue and population estimates set out below, may the State of Alaska spend the money necessary (estimated to total \$2,843,147,000) to accomplish relocation of a functional state capital from Juneau to the new capital site at Willow? If a majority votes YES, the State may spend the money required for that purpose. If a majority votes NO, laws and initiatives relating to capital relocation and indemnification are repealed. (See below for more ballot language) | 91,049 | 102,083 |
| 11/8/94 General Election | Initiative Ballot Measure #3 | "Change of Capital to Wasilla - 93MCAP" This initiative would amend state law to change the state capital from Juneau to Wasilla as of January 1, 1997 | 96,398 | 116,277 |
| 11/8/94 General Election | Initiative Ballot Measure #5 | "Right to Know, Vote - Move Costs - 93COST" This initiative would require that before the state can spend money to move the capital or legislature, the voters must know the total costs, and approve a bond issue for all bondable costs of the move for the 12-year period after approval. A commission would determine both bondable and total costs of the move. Bondable and total costs would include moving personnel and offices, and social, economic and environmental costs to the present and new sites. These costs would also include costs to plan, build, furnish, use and finance facilities at least equal to those provided by the present capital. | 159,781 | 46,665 |
| 11/5/02 General Election | Initiative Ballot Measure #1 | "Moving Location of Legislative Session – 01CHGE" This bill would move all sessions of the state legislature to the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough. If facilities fit for these sessions cannot be found in that borough, sessions would be held in Anchorage until facilities are available in the Mat-Su Borough. The bill would repeal the requirements that before the state can spend money to move the legislature, the voters must be informed of the total costs as would be determined by a commission, and approve a bond issue for all bondable costs of the move. | 74,650 | 153,127 |

ADDENDUM TO 11/2/82 BALLOT PROPOSITION:

COMPONENTS OF ESTIMATED TOTAL COST. The components of the estimated total cost to the State of providing for relocation of a functional state capital at the new capital site at Willow through the anticipated relocation completion date of 1994 are as follows:

Capital improvements in the new capital site at Willow - \$1,286,327,000
Relocation of personnel and equipment to the new capital site at Willow - \$46,769,000
Indemnification of Juneau residents under AS 44.08 - \$589,323,000
Other costs (financing costs and subsidies) - \$920,728,000
TOTAL - \$2,843,147,000

ESTIMATED NET REVENUE FROM LAND SALES

Amount of total estimated cost which may be defrayed by net revenue through 1994 from disposal of land in the new capital site at Willow - \$384,122,000

ESTIMATED COST OF NEW OR EXPANDED FACILITIES IN JUNEAU AND ELSEWHERE IF THE CAPITAL IS NOT RELOCATED

Estimated cost of providing new or expanded facilities in Juneau and elsewhere through 1994 to accommodate growth in state government if the capital is not relocated - \$341,741,000

ESTIMATED POPULATION: STATE EMPLOYEES AND TOTAL RESIDENTS

Number of central state employees who are reasonably expected to be relocated from:

Juneau - 2,832
Anchorage - 1,092
Other communities - 6
Total - 3,930

Population reasonably expected to reside at the new capital site at Willow by completion of relocation in 1994 - 15,000

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In August 1993, a group headed by State Representative Pat Carney of Wasilla, filed a petition for an initiative to move the capital to Wasilla. Over the previous four years, Carney had tried unsuccessfully to move bills through the Legislature to relocate the Legislature to his district.

After receiving a \$40,000 appropriation from the Wasilla City Council, the Carney group ("Move It") hired the firm of Hellenthal & Associates of Anchorage to gather roughly 26,000 signatures to place the question on the 1994 General Election ballot. Carney's efforts reactivated the FRANK (Fiscally Responsible Alaskans Needing Knowledge) Committee headed by C.B. Bettisworth of Fairbanks.

Before the deadline in January 1994, both the Carney Initiative and the FRANK Initiative had turned in more than the required signatures for ballot certification. Like the 1978 FRANK Initiative, which was repealed automatically when the 1982 capital move ballot measure failed, the new FRANK Initiative provided that no money can be spent to move the capital until a commission appointed by the Governor presents a bondable cost figure to voters and voters approve the costs of the move. Unlike the 1978 FRANK Initiative, the 1994 version also included the costs of a legislative move.

In November 1994, voters approved the FRANK Initiative by 77% of the vote (159,781 yes, 46,665 no) and rejected the initiative to move the capital to Wasilla (116,277 no, 96,398 yes).

On July 23, 2001, the Lieutenant Governor certified an initiative (Ballot Measure No. 2 on the November 5, 2002 election ballot) that would require the Alaska Legislature to hold its sessions in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (or in Anchorage until facilities are available in the Mat-Su). The initiative would also repeal all provisions of the 1994 FRANK law dealing with moving the Legislature. The group sponsoring this initiative and registered with the Alaska Public Offices Commission to wage a campaign in support of Ballot Measure No. 2 is "Alaskans for Efficient Government." The primary spokespersons in this group were Robert Monson, Mark Chryson, and Uwe Kalenka.

On November 5, 2002, the initiative to move legislative sessions north was defeated 153,127 to 74,650 – a margin that exceeded 2 to 1.

The Alaska Committee anticipates that the cost issue and the right to know and vote on the costs shall be major determining factors on this question in the future, especially in light of declining oil production and revenue.