

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 21, 2017

8:03 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Zach Fansler, Co-Chair  
Representative Justin Parish, Co-Chair  
Representative Harriet Drummond  
Representative Dean Westlake  
Representative George Rauscher  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative David Talerico

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative DeLena Johnson (alternate)  
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins (alternate)

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 166

"An Act establishing a museum construction grant program in the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 166

SHORT TITLE: MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION GRANT PROGRAM

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) PARISH

03/08/17	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/08/17	(H)	CRA, FIN
03/21/17	(H)	CRA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

LISA WORL, Staff  
Representative Justin Parish  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 166, on behalf of Representative Parish, prime sponsor.

PATRICIA RELAY, Executive Director  
Valdez Museum & Historical Archives  
Valdez, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 166.

KATHERINE ELDEMAR, Director  
Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA)  
Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 166.

JANE LINDSEY, Member  
Museums Alaska;  
Director  
Juneau-Douglas City Museum  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 166.

EVA MALVICH  
Director/Curator  
Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center  
Bethel, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 166.

KATHERINE WRINGSMUTH  
Eagle River, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 166.

LINDA LUCKY, Volunteer Docent  
Anchorage Museum  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 166.

STEPHEN LUNDEEN, Member  
Board of Directors  
Pioneer Air Museum  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the hearing on HB 166.

PETE HAGGLAND, Curator  
Pioneer Air Museum  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 166.

JAMES LOUNSBURY  
Koyukuk Miners Museum

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the hearing on HB 166.

LAURIE STUART MORROW, Executive Director  
Pratt Museum  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 166.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:03:40 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR ZACH FANSLER** called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Saddler, Westlake, Talerico, Rauscher, Parish, and Fansler were present at the call to order. Representative Drummond arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**HB 166-MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION GRANT PROGRAM**

[Contains brief mention of SB 7.]

[8:04:42 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR FANSLER** announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 166, "An Act establishing a museum construction grant program in the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development."

[8:05:27 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR PARISH**, as prime sponsor, presented HB 166. He paraphrased the sponsor statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 166 establishes a matching grant program in the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, for eligible museum construction, expansion or major renovation projects. Museums are eligible for this program if they are located in Alaska, entitled to receive state grants, and provide matching funds from other sources of at least 50 percent of the project costs. Alaska has more than 60 museums throughout the state that provide cultural, tourism, and educational programs. Alaska museums receive 380,993 annual visitors and they serve 29,469 school children each year. Alaskan communities are

enriched with the art, history, and cultural language and education provided at the museums. The approval of this bill will enable museums to access and leverage funding so that they may improve, expand or upgrade as needed, when funds are appropriated. Included with the bill documents you will find twenty three letters of support from nine different Alaskan museums, four regional or statewide museums organizations and Senator Bishop. The award is subject to appropriation and cannot exceed more than 50 percent of the total proposed project costs. HB 166 is a companion bill for SB 7, Sponsors: STEVENS, Bishop, Stedman and Egan.

CO-CHAIR PARISH added, "This does not allocate money; it only creates a program to which, in happier days, we'll be able to put some money for museums which are able to find substantial alternate sources of funding."

[8:07:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted the co-sponsorship of HB 166 and asked Co-Chair Parish if there is a particular project he envisions for Southeast Alaska should HB 166 pass.

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH answered no, but he opined that [Juneau] does benefit from some of the finest museums in the state and everyone in the state should have similar opportunities. He noted that museums throughout the state may benefit under HB 166. He pointed to the numerous letters of support in the committee packet and indicated two are from Juneau - one from the [Juneau-Douglas] City Museum.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked how the State Library, Archives & Museum (SLAM) construction was financed.

CO-CHAIR PARISH indicated he did not know.

[8:09:27 AM](#)

LISA WORL, Staff, Representative Justin Parish, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Parish, prime sponsor of HB 166, offered her understanding that SLAM was financed partially by means of an appropriation through a program similar to that set up for the libraries by the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED). She noted that the director of the Division of Community and Regional Affairs, Katherine Eldemar, was available via teleconference.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said he would appreciate a source of reliable information as to how that facility was constructed.

8:10:38 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what other funding mechanisms the bill sponsor would envision regarding the 50 percent match under HB 166.

CO-CHAIR PARISH answered he imagines there would be: applications to large philanthropic organizations, such as the Rasmussen Foundation; concerned community groups raising funds "by hook or by crook"; and a good number of corporate sponsors. He said, "There are no few individuals and organizations who recognize the bounty that museums can have to our communities and are willing to put their money where their mouth is."

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if Co-Chair Parish envisions that the matches would have to be private or could be from municipal fund sources.

CO-CHAIR PARISH answered that he imagines people attempting to build a museum would accept money from any source willing to provide it, including public sources.

8:12:04 AM

CO-CHAIR FANSLER opened public testimony on HB 166.

8:12:32 AM

PATRICIA RELAY, Executive Director, Valdez Museum & Historical Archives, stated that she is the co-chair of an advocacy committee for Museums Alaska [a statewide museum association] but is speaking today on behalf of the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives in support of HB 166. She paraphrased her written testimony, [included in the committee packet], as follows:

Museums are facing critical infrastructure issues throughout the state. Research shows that almost half of all museums in the state are either currently involved in a construction ... project or will be in the next five years. That's pretty incredible. This bill provides the structure for establishing a systematic approach to prioritizing museum capital

project ... funding requests ... [in] the state. Museums and cultural organizations in Alaska are a critical part of our educational and economic infrastructure, spurring tourism and partnering [with] schools to teach the local curriculum. They contribute to our economy and wellbeing by employing over 260 Alaskans statewide. We spend over ... \$23.5 million annually in the state; we host over 650,000 visitors annually; and serve over 36,000 school children annually .... In Valdez, ... we spend over \$1.3 million annually in our local community; we host over 20,000 visitors annually; and in a small community of less than 4,000, we serve over 3,000 school children annually.

Despite this vital role of museums, our facilities and collections ... are at risk through decreasing federal, local, and charitable giving. As collections grow and visitation increases, the pressure ... [on] our aging infrastructure must be managed. The Valdez Museum [& Historical Archive] is no stranger to this dilemma. We've accomplished a lot within the last few years: incorporating [a] successful expanded range of public programming; major upgrades to several exhibits; we've increased visitation; ... and [the museum has] raised ... [its] standards of collections management. Despite these achievements, our institution is now at a point in which its progress is being hampered by limitations of space. ... In order to maintain and improve our standards of professionalism and to preserve our vision for the future, our organization needs to move away from our current environment of shared-purpose space and move towards a facility [with] dedicated ... space [designed] for single use functionality. At this point, we've got collections stored at baseball fields; we've got collections stored in tents; and this environment is not suitable for rare artifacts that tell the Alaska story.

Now, at the core of our mission is education. Over the years we've had numerous teachers share their gratitude for how the Valdez Museum [& Historical Archives] supports their work. Recently, Sheri Beck, a fourth-grade teacher with the Valdez City Schools shared with our museum educator: "I just returned from a National Social Studies convention in New

Orleans. I thought of you so many times and wished ... [we] could be brainstorming side by side. I was also reminded how fortunate we are in Valdez and in my partnership with you to have a local museum available for help and support. Thank you. Your recent lesson with my students using artifacts and primary sources was such a wonderful example of what we heard at the conference as stellar teaching."

So, without proper care and housing of our ... museum's collections and artifacts, we ... won't be able to continue our robust education program. I urge this committee to speak up for all Alaska museums; we're just one example.

MS. RELAY concluded her testimony by thanking the committee for its time, consideration, and service to Alaska, and she urged its members to pass HB 166.

[8:17:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked Ms. Relay how the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives construction and operation were and are funded.

MS. RELAY answered that the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. She said the organization formerly operated as a department of the City of Valdez but in 1997 switched to a public, private partnership. Currently, the City of Valdez supports the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives through a community service organization grant that is 60-65 percent of the organization's annual operating budget. She said the onus is on the nonprofit to raise the remaining 35-40 percent through fundraising efforts.

MS. RELAY stated that it is the mission of the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives to preserve, present, and interpret the heritage and culture of not only Valdez, but the Copper River Basin and Prince William Sound. It serves the entire Valdez and Cordova U.S. Census area and does outreach programs throughout the region. She reported that the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives has over 75,000 rare objects and artifacts. She offered examples. Ms. Relay said the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives tells the story of its collections through exhibits and educational and public programs; it has approximately 11,000 square feet of permanent exhibit space and temporary exhibit space [for paintings], which is funded primarily with generous

support from the Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA). She said the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives has a robust education department, with a museum educator that brings artifacts to students and hosts groups of students at the museum on a regular basis. She said homeschooled children in Valdez consider the museum their live history classroom. She said the public programs are multigenerational and bring viewers in year round.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives would have plans for capital projects, for which the state, under HB 166, would pick up half the cost.

MS. RELAY responded that the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives has completed a master interpretive plan, which she described as a pre-planning document that assesses the current situation and considers options to expand, renovate, or build new. She said the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives currently has two facilities. The most cherished exhibit, "Remembering Old Valdez," is housed in old Army Corps of Engineers' warehouse built in 1967. She explained that following the Earthquake of 1964, Valdez was moved four miles, and "Remembering Old Valdez" is a scale model of the original town site. The warehouse is going to be razed and a sustainable solution is to merge the museum's two locations into one facility. She said hopefully in the next five to ten years this work will be feasible.

MS. RELAY, in response to follow-up questions, said the estimated cost of the plans is between \$28 and \$35 million. She added that a landowner has offered land and other city-owned parcels of land are also being considered. She said the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives receives over 20,000 visitors each year, the majority of them between Memorial Day and Labor Day, and approximately 80 percent of visitors come from outside Valdez. There is a year-round effort made. Currently, the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives is preparing for its annual student art show, sponsored by Alyeska Pipeline Service Company and ASCA. She said this exhibit takes six months of planning. She said her staff comprises: a full-time curator of collections and exhibits and a full-time curator of education and public programs. Funds from grants are used for big projects. She offered examples. She said the majority of the capital expense goes to housing of the collection, including heating, electricity, staff pay, and security, at a cost of approximately \$90,000 in utilities annually.

[8:29:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND asked if the Valdez Museum & Historical Archives charges admission.

MS. RELAY answered yes. She related that currently support from the City of Valdez through a community service organizational grant covers payroll and a minor part of utilities, and the museum would not be able to function without the admission charged, which is: \$8 general, \$6 seniors and military, and free to children and members. In response to a follow-up question, she estimated that general admission, museum services, and public programming fees combined equal approximately \$60,000 in annual income.

[8:32:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said he would like to know what the state's role has been in capital funding of museums, archives, libraries, and preservation societies.

[8:32:31 AM](#)

KATHERINE ELDEMAR, Director, Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA), Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED), stated that [HB 166] is modeled after "the library grant statute." She mentioned designated legislative grants that get funded through choices made by the legislature. She said the system "under this statute" would be slightly different: The division would receive applications, score them, and allocate the resources based on the score, but the legislature would appropriate the funds. Ms. Eldemar continued: "Like I said, this is modeled after the library program, but it still remains unfunded, so we don't have anything to report as how that actual program ... will, in fact, work."

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked Ms. Eldemar to confirm she was saying that it is the library grant program that is currently unfunded.

MS. ELDEMAR answered that is correct. She said the division accepted applications and scored them, and it is holding on to those applications. She directed attention to language in HB 166, on page 1, lines 10-11, which read: "The department may not accept the application for a grant under this section unless the legislature makes an appropriation for the grant program." She said this language would prevent grantees from doing a lot of work until after the legislature has made the appropriation.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked, "Has there ever been grant funding through the library grant program?"

MS. ELDEMAR answered no.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER surmised, "And this program for the museums is modeled after the library grant program."

MS. ELDEMAR answered that is correct.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what the state's role has been in the past for construction funding for libraries and museums.

MS. ELDEMAR said she could research for an answer by looking through former designated legislative grants.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said that would be helpful, because the proposed legislation would establish a new program of public support for museums at 50 percent of the cost, and he is trying to find out what the precedent has been. He offered his understanding that Ms. Eldemar was saying it is primarily, if not exclusively, through [designated] legislative grants.

MS. ELDEMAR responded that that is her understanding.

[8:36:39 AM](#)

JANE LINDSEY, Member, Museums Alaska; Director, Juneau-Douglas City Museum, paraphrased her written testimony [included in the committee packet], as follows:

Good morning, my name is Jane Lindsey, I'm here today as a member of Museums Alaska, a non-profit association of statewide museum professionals; I'm also the director of the Juneau-Douglas City Museum. I'd like to thank Representative Parish for sponsoring HB 166, companion bill to SB 7, sponsored by Senator Stevens.

The need for this bill is demonstrated in a 2014 McDowell survey for the Foraker Group that studied the needs of Alaskan museums and capital planning. This information underscores that most of our Alaskan collections are in buildings never meant to be museums. Three-quarters of the respondents of the survey identified significant capital improvement

needs within the next five years: Exhibition space expansion or improvement; increase in facility size; collections storage expansion; and security improvements are the top priorities listed.

Building expansions and new construction are complicated projects that take years of planning and fundraising. Outlined in the museum profiles in the McDowell survey, museum staff and personnel are tasked with raising funds at least 10 times larger than a museum's annual budget. These ... same folks are working on collections care, exhibits, programs, education, and the regular business of caring for a facility and generating revenue to operate.

The core mission of what we do is our collections; our work entails preserving objects, photos, [and] documents of the history of Alaska, and we care for these in perpetuity, and we find meaningful ways to give them back to the public through exhibits, education, and research opportunities.

HB 166 is a zero fiscal note bill for capital improvement projects if and when funding becomes available. Modeled after the successful library construction grant program, 50 percent of proposed costs to build, expand, or renovate existing facilities will encourage museums to assess needs within their buildings - such as sustainable energy initiatives for specialized environments, which museums need - and develop achievable goals. It can help them create financial partnerships with local, non-profit, state, and federal granting agencies, which is what we regularly work with.

... Governor Walker's proclamation that 2017 is a "Year of History and Heritage" ... [recognizing] the One Hundred and Fiftieth anniversary of Russia ceding its Alaskan interests to the United States ... encourages us "to study, teach, reflect upon our past, and apply its lessons to a brighter, more inclusive future." HB 166 helps us preserve Alaskan heritage so that we may continue to study, teach, and reflect.

Thank you for your time and the work you do on behalf of the state of Alaska and our fellow Alaskans.

8:40:06 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted that Ms. Lindsey had said HB 166 is modeled after the successful library grant program, while Ms. Relay had said there have been no legislative grants through that program. He asked Ms. Lindsey if she could describe the operation of the library grant program and explain why she called it successful.

MS. LINDSEY answered that while she does not know the details of the program, she does know it resulted in the construction of 13-20 libraries in Alaska, all of which have come up with 50 percent matching grants. She offered her understanding that these libraries worked as a consortium. She said her understanding - from speaking with people at DCCED and those associated with the libraries that have received the funding - is that it takes many years to become "shovel ready," which is the point a library must be at in order to apply for the grant. She said the libraries have gone through the process of ensuring there is community consensus, the necessary money is there, that they can operate, building the community resources that are widely used, and being energy efficient. Ms. Lindsey pointed out that Ms. Relay pays \$90 million annually and operates from an antiquated building, so certainly it takes more money to preserve the environment and the collections in it, but when Ms. Relay is able to afford an expansion, with improvements made, she will realize energy efficiency.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked Ms. Lindsey if she knows how the SLAM was funded.

MS. LINDSEY offered her understanding that because the SLAM was funded through the legislature, the money is from the operating budget rather than the capital budget; therefore, the SLAM would not be eligible for any money that became available under HB 166.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER talked about the constitutional obligation of state to provide public education and pay 70-100 percent of the capital costs of building schools and associated libraries. He asked why the state should pay half the cost of the museums in Alaska.

MS. LINDSEY answered that museums are charged with the responsibility of caring for public trust heritage collections, which are open to the public and owned by and accessible to

everyone. She noted that some money comes from admissions, but reemphasized the charge given to museums, and she stated her belief that that is a worthy goal for [the benefit of] "the state of Alaska and every human being."

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said he does not disagree.

[8:44:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND asked if the Juneau-Douglas City Museum charges admission.

MS. LINDSEY answered yes: \$6 for adults; \$5 for seniors; free to children 13 and under; and that charge goes down by \$1 in the winter, when the museum finds community sponsors. She said the museum encourages people to use its facility and its education programs are free, so dollars in revenues do not necessarily match the services given. She said the Juneau-Douglas City Museum brings in about \$75,000 annually in admissions and public programs where it is generating revenue; it has a budget of about \$425,000; but many of its programs are free to the public.

[8:45:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FANSLER opened public testimony on HB 166.

[8:46:19 AM](#)

EVA MALVICH, Director/Curator, Yupiit Piciryarait Museum, said the museum is run by the Association of Village Council Presidents; it is located within the Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center, which is owned and operated by the Kuskokwim campus of the University of Alaska. Ms. Malvich related that the Yupiit Piciryarait Museum is the only one in the region and owns over 8,000 objects relating to the Yup'ik people, including books, audio recordings, paper archives, photos, videos, fine art objects, and objects related to natural history. She said there are tools the Yupik forefathers used to live off the land and water that are still vital today in teaching children and giving them a sense of their own identity. She stated, "We have to tell our own story, according to our own world view, and that is something that cannot be underestimated." She said HB 166 would give the Yupiit Piciryarait Museum a chance for needed renovation.

MS. MALVICH shared that the Yupiit Piciryarait Museum needs a new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system to

maintain humidity at levels consistent for the care of hides, skins, and ivory - all objects in danger of permanent damage. She said the current humidity control is hurting the collection, and a new one will cost \$125,000 to purchase and \$80,000 a year to maintain.

MS. MALVICH continued:

Our museum is vital to educating our own people about making clothing, tools, and art. We do not need an outside expert to tell us who we are. We do not need to travel to the Smithsonian down states to study our own objects. By running a museum and providing education opportunities in our region, by our own people, we have the knowledge and means to sustain our own Yup'ik culture.

MS. MALVICH emphasized the importance of keeping artifacts in the region, not in Fairbanks or Juneau, which she said are too far away. She said, "We need them closer to home so that we can continue to teach and learn about our rich Yup'ik and Cup'ik culture through studying our collection." She said HB 166 would help immensely by giving her organization the means by which to secure funds for construction and renovation of museums and cultural centers.

[8:50:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND referred to Ms. Malvich's comment that the center does not need to leave Bethel to show its artifacts to its people. She mentioned the Smithsonian's traveling exhibits. She said she has heard about collections being returned to museums after being borrowed by other countries, states, and organizations "after decades of being missing from the state." She asked, "If your museum was the subject of such a collection, are there requirements made by ... the returning organization as to the condition of the facility before they will return artifacts ... to a particular museum?"

[8:51:26 AM](#)

MS. MALVICH noted that the Rasmussen Foundation loans artifacts, but is not likely to loan them to the Yupiit Piciryarait Museum, because of the lack of sufficient HVAC that can maintain the necessary humidity level of between 30 and 50 percent. She said she does not bother to apply because of that one condition. She related that the humidity in Bethel ranges from 1 percent in the

winter to 50 percent in the summer; maintaining a range of 30-50 percent is a challenge; and the existing fluctuation is what causes damage to the collection. In response to a follow-up question, she said there is one piece that has already sustained damage: a shaman's shawl that was found inside a coffin in 1971, and while in storage it split in half. She said the museum would like to get it repaired, because it is the only one of its kind in the world, but it would get damaged again without the upgrade to the HVAC.

8:54:50 AM

KATHERINE WRINGSMUTH, testified in support of HB 166. She shared that Alaska history is important to her. She said she has: taught history at the Chugiak-Eagle River campus of the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA); served as president of the Alaska Historical Society; and curated historical exhibits. Furthermore, she currently organizes two lecture series at a library in Mountain View and at Chugiak High School. Ms. Wringsmuth talked about the power of historical wisdom and how a society can erode if history is not "shared, understood, and valued by everyone." She said Alaska has more than 60 museums that provide cultural tourism and educational programs to visitors. She said these museums are caretakers of Alaska's culture and major contributors to the state's economy.

MS. WRINGSMUTH related that as a professor of Alaska history, the museum assignments she gives her students afford them the opportunity to conduct original research at the undergraduate level. She said only a handful of people have the opportunity to take Alaska history in school, and she emphasized that museums are one of the few places where residents, as well as the many visitors to the state can learn about Alaska. Far too many of those museums face deterioration and are in critical need of renovation, which Ms. Wringsmuth characterized as a threat to Alaska's history as well as to its future. She stated her belief that "museums help to cultivate Alaska's next generation." She emphasized there is a need for visionaries. She quoted former Governor Walter J. Hickel as having said, "There is no vision, no hope, no future, no agenda for Alaska, if your only ideology, if your only philosophy, if your only cause is to cut the budget." She concluded, "As we face unprecedented financial challenges, we cannot forget from where we came. We must remember the voice of the people and foster our newest, youngest visionaries." She expressed thanks for support of HB 166 as a means to invest in Alaska's future.

8:58:23 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said he hears frequently that museums are an important cultural repository and educational tool. He asked Ms. Wringsmuth if she thinks it would be appropriate for the state to fund museums as part of Alaska's educational mission.

MS. WRINGSMUTH answered, "Absolutely."

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if she thinks museums should share in the funding stream that the public school system receives from the state.

MS. WRINGSMUTH answered that is a difficult question to answer. She clarified that while she recognizes the value and reciprocal nature of [schools] and museums, she cannot speak to the financial side. Notwithstanding that, she said she can envision the two working together. She said there are so many new residents coming to Alaska who do not have the opportunity to learn Alaska's history and become dependent on "these popular narratives that may not even have much reality in the past," which she said is dangerous. She talked about aligned partnerships of historical societies, K-12, university systems, and museums working toward a common purpose, but said she does not see that happening right now, because "we're all kind of fighting over the small pot of money that does exist." She said other states, for example, Minnesota, have adopted this model of cooperation.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted that Chugiak has a strong historical society.

MS. WRINGSMUTH concurred and related that efforts are being made to draw visitors in to learn about the area's rich history.

9:02:34 AM

LINDA LUCKY, Volunteer Docent, Anchorage Museum, testified in support of HB 166. She said the matching grant program would help build, renovate, expand, and preserve Alaska collections that are held in the public trust and support creative vision of the institution. She said exhibition space, increase in facility size, collection storage expansion, and security improvement are listed among the top priorities of the proposed legislation. She said, "I like that the program takes the politics out of applying for a grant." She opined that support

of HB 166 would be an investment in the well-being of communities.

MS. LUCKY stated that the Anchorage Museum connects people through its programs; through workshops, new experiences, exhibitions, and events; it expands people's views of the world. She said just after the museum's latest expansion, it opened a "Star Wars" exhibit that was "a perfect segue between the old and the new." The exhibit brought in parents, children, Star Wars fans, and people who had never been to a museum before, and there were many hands-on displays to challenge the visitors' imaginations. She offered further details. She quoted the director of the Anchorage Museum, Julie Decker, as saying, "We think museums matter more now than ever before. In an age where everything is on line, visitation rates to museums around the world are rising. Museums are not storehouses of the past; they are an active record of where we come from, who we are, and where we are going. Museums activate curiosity about the world in which we see and come to know ourselves as part of a continuum of shared human identity." Ms. Lucky urged the committee to support HB 166.

[9:05:30 AM](#)

MS. LUCKY, in response to a question from Representative Saddler, surmised that the funding for the original construction and the expansion of the Anchorage Museum was from the Rasmussen Foundation.

[9:06:17 AM](#)

STEPHEN LUNDEEN, Member, Board of Directors, Pioneer Air Museum, identified critical infrastructure needs of the museum. He indicated that the museum lacks bathroom facilities and depends on a neighboring facility to be open, and HB 166 would "broaden potential funding avenues" to take care of such needs. He related that another need is for a restoration facility for the proper preservation, restoration, and, in some cases, assembly of the museum's historical aircraft. For example, he said the museum owns a 1929 Swallow - one of only 200 built - that needs to be assembled. Mr. Lundeen stated that the Pioneer Air Museum has been operating on a self-sustaining basis, and he indicated that the museum can continue on its own after it receives state funding. He encouraged support for HB 166.

[9:09:40 AM](#)

PETE HAGGLAND, Curator, Pioneer Air Museum, testified that the museum is housed in a building that was never designed to be a museum and lacks space for displays, restoration, and archives. He said the archiving and cataloguing takes place with state grants. He related that the museum is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day. He echoed Mr. Lundeen's comments regarding the need for restrooms, adding that there are not even facilities for the hired help. Mr. Hagglund said the Pioneer Air Museum charges an entrance fee to the public, but not to school children or "the disadvantaged." He said the museum receives 9,000 paid visitors per year, not counting school children and runs classes for the school district. He said HB 166 has the potential to help the museum take care of some of its dire needs. He stated support for HB 166, and he opined that the history of all of Alaska needs to be preserved and protected for people to see.

[9:13:18 AM](#)

JAMES LOUNSBURY testified that he lives in Alaska in the summertime and, after receiving a gift of land, converted a cook house into a museum. He said he does not charge an entry fee. He related that this year will be the second he has hosted the Pioneers of Alaska, Igloo Number 8, from Fairbanks, Alaska. He stated support of the [Pioneer Air] Museum in Fairbanks. He shared that his whole family is in aviation; both his father and mother flew planes; and his mother was the first female to solo in Fairbanks. Mr. Lounsbury remarked on the ample storage space at the Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum, in Anchorage, Alaska, and said it would be great if Fairbanks could "get a little bit of that stuff" in order to have room for the planes stored there. He mentioned that he had played music at an opening of an air museum last year. Mr. Lounsbury concluded by revealing that he is a fourth-generation Alaskan.

[9:15:55 AM](#)

LAURIE STUART MORROW, Executive Director, Pratt Museum, testified in support of HB 166. She said museums fill many roles: drawing in tourists in the summer and bolstering support for local, small businesses; and serving as gathering place for community discussion in the winter. She said museums provide venues for artists and scientists to "share their discoveries and epiphanies for the benefit of the community."

MS. STUART MORROW said museums such as the Pratt are structured as nonprofit organizations that share their mission to the community, and because their focus is on outreach and

accessibility, they don't usually have money left over for renovation or new construction. She said at least 36 museums in Alaska, including the Pratt Museum, have identified significant capital improvement needs, which means that over 30 communities in the state are concerned about being able to provide adequate services for the collections provided to them by the public.

MS. STUART MORROW remarked that as a centennial building, the current structure housing the Pratt Museum is 50 years old, and despite two add-on renovations over those 50 years, it lacks the space necessary to "adequately care for cultural, historical, and natural history collections from one generation to the next." She said the museum has been working on a cultural campaign for over 10 years, with the hope of creating a building that will protect the heritage and provide the space necessary for a community to gather and "co-create more resilient community relationships."

MS. STUART MORROW said the [proposed] museum construction grant program would provide a mechanism for museums in Alaska that often lack tax dollars or a for-profit structure to request support in continuing to be caretakers of "communities' valued history, culture, and ongoing dialogue." She concluded, "For this reason, we request passage of HB 166."

[9:18:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FANSLER, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 166.

[9:19:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WESTLAKE said he has gone to the Pratt Museum and the museum in Valdez. He said [museums] bring "what's important to that area." He characterized HB 166 as a worthy cause. He credited Representative Saddler as having said that "it is part of education." He stated that as a person gets older, he/she realizes "just how important this is." He expressed delight that the proposed legislation is before the committee.

[9:19:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO said he thinks [HB 166] is great. He remarked that it could be a while before the state [has the financial means] to be able to provide the money for an appropriation. In response to a concern he said was expressed to him via e-mail, he clarified on the record that under Title

14, which is referenced in HB 166, museums are defined as "organized and permanent public institutions"; therefore, any funds appropriated could not be used for private collections.

[9:20:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND said as testimony reflected, there are collections that are in danger. She opined that at some point the legislature will have to figure out how to make the appropriations. In the meantime, she said she thinks the legislature needs to allow museums around the state to "get this structure in place" and begin to move forward, so that when funding does become available, "they can begin to do the work." She expressed support of HB 166.

[HB 166 was held over.]

[9:21:35 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH noted that as he spoke, the Alaska Association of Student Governments was gathered at the Juneau-Douglas City Museum, and he urged adjournment so members could attend the final portion and lend their support for work of the student government officials.

[9:22:57 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:23 a.m.