

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

January 28, 2025

3:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Scott Kawasaki, Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Vice Chair
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Robert Yundt

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 7

Urging the President of the United States and the United States Secretary of the Interior to maintain Denali as the official name for the tallest mountain in North America.

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 31

"An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Administration; creating an address confidentiality program; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SJR 7

SHORT TITLE: RES. TO MAINTAIN DENALI AS OFFICIAL NAME

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) KAWASAKI

01/24/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/25	(S)	STA
01/28/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 31

SHORT TITLE: ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) KIEHL

01/10/25 (S) PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25 (S) STA, FIN
01/28/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

SALLY RAFSON, Staff
Senator Scott Kawasaki
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the summary of changes from version A to N for SJR 7.

SARAH SNOWBERGER, Staff
Representative Maxine Dibert
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on SJR 7.

REPRESENTATIVE MAXINE DIBERT, District 31
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 7.

ED MARTIN, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 7.

SENATOR JESSE KIEHL, District B
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 31.

ELLA ADKISON, Staff
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided the sectional analysis for SB 31.

RANDY MCLELLAN, President
Alaska Correctional Officers Association (ACO)A
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 31.

KEELEY OLSON, Executive Director

Standing Together Against Rape (STAR)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 31.

BRAD EWING, Director
Shared Services of Alaska
Department of Administration (DOA)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on SB 31.

ED MARTIN, representing Self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with concerns on SB 31.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:31:34 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Bjorkman, Wielechowski, Gray-Jackson, Yundt and Chair Kawasaki.

SJR 7-RES. TO MAINTAIN DENALI AS OFFICIAL NAME

[3:32:49 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 7 Urging the President of the United States and the United States Secretary of the Interior to maintain Denali as the official name for the tallest mountain in North America.

[3:33:06 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI solicited a motion.

[3:33:12 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN moved to adopt the committee substitute (CS) for SJR 7, work order 34-LS0443\N, as the working document.

[3:33:55 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI objected for purposes of discussion.

[3:34:14 PM](#)

SALLY RAFSON, Staff, Senator Scott Kawasaki, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented the summary of changes from version A to N for SJR 7 as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Explanation of Changes: SJR 7, Version A to N

All deletions reference page and line numbers from the route version A, while all additions reference page and line numbers from the Rules Committee substitute, version N

Page 1, lines 2-4 of version N: The title was amended to reflect the addition of new "resolve" language on Page 2, lines 26-27, as well as lines 29-32.

Page 1, lines 4-5 of version A: Deleted "whereas" language from the previous version.

Page 1, line 15 through Page 2, line 1 of version N: Added the following language: "WHEREAS on June 7, 1913, Walter Harper, a 20-year-old man of Athabaskan descent, became the first person to stand on the summit of the mountain."

Page 2, lines 19-24 of version A: Deleted "whereas" language from the previous version.

Page 2, lines 22-24 of version N: Added the following language "WHEREAS the Alaska State Legislature supports efforts to recognize the heritage of the state's Alaska Native peoples and the continuing importance of the mountain to Alaska Native culture."

Page 2, lines 26-27 of version N: Added the "United States Board on Geographic Names" to the list of entities in the resolutions request.

Page 2, lines 29-31 of version N: Added additional "resolve" language requesting Alaska's congressional delegation to advocate on behalf of, and work to preserve, Denali as the official name for the tallest mountain in North America.

Page 3, lines 1-7 of version N: Replaced previous reference to "United States Secretary of the Interior" with the "Honorable Walter Cruickshank, Acting United States Secretary of the Interior" for cleanup purposes. Added the following to the list of individuals and entities copied on the resolution: the "Domestic Names Committee," the "United States Board on Geographic Names," the "Honorable Lisa Murkowski,"

the "Honorable Dan Sullivan," and the "Honorable Nick Begich."

[3:36:55 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked what the process is for renaming a mountain, whether the name is officially changed, or if there is still a formal process to go through, such as public input through the Department of the Interior.

[3:37:05 PM](#)

MS. RAFSON replied she was unsure.

[3:37:08 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI referred the question to the sponsor of the House companion resolution.

[3:37:21 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI found no further objection and CSSJR 7 was adopted as the working document.

[3:38:17 PM](#)

SARAH SNOWBERGER, Staff, Representative Maxine Dibert, Juneau, Alaska answered questions about the process of renaming Denali. She shared her understanding of the renaming process stating through executive order the President of the United States directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish a geographic naming board made up of seven members from various agencies who review all the name changes. Public input is generally not part of the process. She stated in the past, name changes could be delayed if a member of Congress had an active bill concerning the name, as was the case with Mount McKinley. She stated the delay ended in 2015 when President Obama and the Interior Secretary overrode the congressional hold, allowing the mountain to be officially renamed Denali.

[3:40:17 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether [the federal government] had officially changed the name back to Mt. McKinley.

SARAH SNOWBERGER agreed it has not been named yet.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if this is Alaska's opportunity to weigh in on the renaming of Denali.

SARAH SNOWBERGER answered yes. She stated that is partly the reason for reaching out to Alaska's congressional delegation. They have the power to step in and make changes. SJR 7 directs

the President of the United States, the Secretary of the Interior, and Alaska's congressional representatives will receive copies of the resolution.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if a member of Alaska's congressional delegation filed a bill to name the mountain Denali that would stop the process [of the naming board].

SARAH SNOWBERGER answered yes.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if there is any indication Alaska's congressional delegation has filed a bill to stop the process.

SARAH SNOWBERGER responded Representative Dibert's office contacted the offices of Senators Murkowski and Senator Sullivan with no response yet. She stated both senators have publicly supported keeping the name Denali, but their next steps are unknown. That's why the resolution also goes to them.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if it would be beneficial to put language in the resolve urging Alaska's delegation to file legislation to rename the mountain Denali.

SARAH SNOWBERGER replied Alaska's delegation is aware of the option. However, the resolution could incorporate that language.

[3:42:48 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI invited Representative Dibert to begin her presentation on SJR 7.

[3:43:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MAXINE DIBERT, District 31, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, testified in support of SJR 7 as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

There is something truly special about seeing Mount Denali in our home state. Even a brief glimpse of the highest peak in North America fills Alaskans with a sense of pride. The towering giant, in all its glory, stands as a symbol of our state's majesty. Denali has been known by its true name for thousands of years, and that name is Denali. It's not just a name-it's a symbol of history, culture, and respect. The name comes from the Koyukon Athabascan language, meaning "The Tall One."

As many of you know, the journey to formally recognize this name has not been an easy one. It took 40 years from the time the Alaska State Legislature passed its 1975 resolution for the federal government to officially adopt the name Denali. This hard-fought victory exemplifies the determination of the people of Alaska, who never wavered in advocating for a name that truly represents our identity. In 2015, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names finally acknowledged Denali, a decision celebrated statewide for its recognition of the mountain's cultural and historical importance not just to Native Alaskans but to everyone who calls this state home.

I urge you, members of the Senate State Affairs Committee, to support Senate Joint Resolution 7. Denali is more than a mountain it is a cornerstone of Alaska's history, a tribute to our diverse culture, and a testament to the people who have cherished this land for millennia. If the federal government moves to change the name again, it is an affront to our state sovereignty. To officially change the name would not only dishonor those who have fought to protect Denali's legacy but also dismiss the voices of the Native communities whose roots are intertwined with this land.

Let us preserve the name Denali-the name that embodies the majesty of the tallest peak in North America, the name that bridges our past and our future, and the name that continues to inspire pride in all Alaskans.

[3:46:17 PM](#)

SARAH SNOWBERGER stated a note was received from legislative legal services suggesting the resolve; avoid specifying members of Alaska's delegation introduce legislation. She stated instead it was recommended to keep SJR 7 broad, allowing for options.

[3:47:13 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI opened public testimony on SJR 7.

[3:47:47 PM](#)

ED MARTIN, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified in support of SJR 7. He stated he remembers the mountain being called Mt. McKinley but if it's in the best interest of Alaska to keep it Denali, that's all he cares about.

[3:50:38 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI closed public testimony on SJR 7.

[3:51:21 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether the state has ever officially recognized or designated the mountain as Denali for geographic naming purposes.

[3:51:34 PM](#)

SARAH SNOWBERGER replied she would collect the information and share it with the committee.

[3:51:39 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI expressed his understanding that the state has done this but would like confirmation.

[3:51:45 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI stated his belief that Denali is officially referenced in statute. He said the federal government changed Denali to Mt. McKinley in 1917. However, three to four thousand years prior, the mountain's name was Denali.

[3:52:54 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held SJR 7 in committee.

[3:53:02 PM](#)

At ease.

SB 31-ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM

[3:53:47 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SB 31 SENATE BILL NO. 31 "An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Administration; creating an address confidentiality program; and providing for an effective date."

[3:54:04 PM](#)

SENATOR JESSE KIEHL, District B, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, summarized SB 31 as the sponsor of the bill explained SB 31 establishes an address protection program within the Department of Administration. SB 31 was inspired by a story of a domestic violence survivor who, despite taking all necessary precautions, nearly encountered her abuser at a post office. He stated SB 31 aims to help survivors, as well as public safety professionals, by offering a confidential mail

forwarding service through a state-issued post office box. Unlike similar programs, this bill also allows peace officers and correctional officers to participate for their safety. He said the program ensures privacy, allowing individuals to rebuild their lives without fear of being tracked.

[3:58:35 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked if the PO BOX service would have a fee.

[3:58:52 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL responded no. SB 31 is designed so the department cannot charge a fee. The State of Alaska would manage additional mail through a designated post office box for the program. The program administrator would forward the mail to the participant's confidential address, thereby incurring no extra cost to the participant.

[3:59:37 PM](#)

ELLA ADKISON, Staff, Senator Jesse Kiehl, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided the sectional analysis for SB 31:

[Original punctuation provided.]

SB 31: Address Protection

Sectional Analysis

Sec.1: Puts the program in the Department of Administration.

Sec.2: Creates the program.

(b) requires a Post Office Box as a substitute mailing address for enrollees and instructs the department to forward mail to participants. It charges the department with protecting confidentiality and requires regulations to govern enrollment and withdrawal.

(c) describes eligible participants as people sheltered by a protective order and their parents, guardians, children, and household members. It also admits peace officers and correctional officers.

(d) prevents registered sex offenders from enrolling in the program.

(e) requires state and municipal agencies to accept the P.O. Box.

- (f) describes the eligibility period.
- (g) prevents the department from charging a fee.
- (h) allows access to confidential addresses subject to a search warrant.
- (i) establishes penalties for unlawfully revealing a protected individual's address.
- (j) defines certain terms.

Sec. 3: Establishes a transition period for the department to adopt regulations to implement the program.

Sec. 4: Lets the department begin its regulation process immediately.

Sec. 5: Sets an effective date of Jan. 1, 2026 for the rest of the bill.

[4:00:53 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced invited testimony and opened public testimony on SB 31.

[4:01:17 PM](#)

RANDY MCLELLAN, President, Alaska Correctional Officers Association (ACOA), Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 31. He stated correctional officers' work in dangerous environments, dealing with aggressive offenders convicted of serious crimes. They are the barrier between offenders and the public, often facing threats to themselves, their families, and property. He stated he personally experienced this after a prisoner accessed his personal information and threatened his family. SB 31 is crucial as correctional officers are frequently called to testify in court, and their personal information is often exposed during legal proceedings, putting them at risk.

[4:04:00 PM](#)

KEELEY OLSON, Executive Director, Standing Together Against Rape (STAR), Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 31 as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Prior to working at STAR, I was a Victim Advocate with a Prosecuting Attorney's Office in Washington State and managed a Domestic Violence Shelter program in Montana. Both states had Address Confidentiality Programs, which were essential tools used by Victim

Advocates to assist someone with stalking or high lethality risk to be safer. Combined with comprehensive safety planning and an emergency relocation plan, the Address Confidentiality Programs helped save lives and helped survivors cope with the constant fear of their address being compromised.

Address Confidentiality Programs are available in at least forty states. The programs I have experience with were accessible, easy to use, and inexpensive. Out of curiosity, I contacted Montana's Program Administrator to ask about their program. It began in 2006 with an initial startup cost of \$50,000. Over the last 17 years, the program cost Montana around \$22,000 a year to operate, with 68 participants enrolled. Main costs of the program were to pay a small portion of the Program Administrator and her assistant's salaries.

I applaud making the program accessible to law enforcement. I have worked with those in law enforcement who have placed their homes in a spouse or family member's name to protect their addresses, so I can appreciate the need for their inclusion in this bill.

[4:08:34 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked how the estimate of 60 pieces of mail per year per enrollee in the program was determined.

[4:08:56 PM](#)

BRAD EWING, Director, Shared Services of Alaska, Department of Administration (DOA), Juneau, Alaska, answered questions regarding SB 31. He stated the DOA contacted several states running similar programs, and based on feedback, we arrived at the average amount of mail sent annually.

SENATOR BJORKMAN opined 60 felt high given what the bill sponsor described. He asked if it is for a range 23 program manager to oversee just one employee.

MR. EWING replied the program is unique in the Division of Shared Services of Alaska. The division has a central mail program with five carriers, but this is a separate initiative. He stated that based on talks with other states, for example Arizona, one range 22 program manager and an administrative assistant would be the right setup for a program of this size in

Alaska. Normally, our supervisors have more than one direct report.

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked how the Division might implement the program efficiently given the current fiscal constraints of the state. He said he's open to funding the necessary positions to support this essential service but is curious about the assigned salary ranges and the inclusion of annual travel to conferences and other items in the fiscal note.

[4:11:45 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI shared some concerns about the fiscal note and knows the finance committee will take a close look at it. He said Arizona has a population of about 7.5 million, roughly 10 times the population of Alaska and doubts Arizona spends \$4 million on its program. He opined that the cost seems high.

[4:12:21 PM](#)

MR. EWING replied he would work with the bill's sponsor to be as financially efficient as possible.

[4:13:02 PM](#)

ED MARTIN, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified with concerns on SB 31. He stated SB 31 is a good bill and could really help people but wondered the effectiveness considering the amount of information available online. He stated anyone can google an address. The program might not fully protect people if it cannot limit what is already public on search engines.

[4:15:10 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI stated he has more questions about the fiscal note but will hold off and let the finance committee work through the fiscal note.

[4:15:24 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI noted that the Division of Elections keeps a list of where people live to determine their voting districts. It also has mailing addresses, which can differ from physical ones. He stated that while it releases data regularly, residential addresses are not released when a box to keep private is checked. He commented that the effort to check a keep private box shouldn't cost as much as the fiscal note suggests. He opined that managing a list like this through the department should have some cost, but it shouldn't be overly expensive.

[4:16:16 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL stated that although many states place address confidentiality programs within the Division of Elections; after working with the executive branch, it was decided Alaska's program should be in the Department of Administration due to its centralized mail system. The Division of Elections expressed concerns about managing the program. He stated that where it's housed isn't as important as getting the service to Alaskans. Election officials and clerks already follow confidentiality rules for voters who check the privacy box, and those rules would still apply for participants using the protected address. Regarding online privacy, he said no program can erase someone from the internet. He said SB 31 helps those restarting their lives or in public safety careers by giving them a safe address to use in records, reducing their exposure online.

[4:19:38 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI kept public testimony open for SB 31.

[4:20:22 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held SB 31 in committee.

[4:21:29 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kawasaki adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 4:21 p.m.