

S

B

3/5

3/6

W

Alaska Department of Education

POSITION PAPER

Senate Bills 315 and 316

Summary

Senate Bill 315 calls for the establishment of an Alaskan Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Museum and SB 316 provides funds. The intent of this legislation is admirable - to provide for the preservation and interpretation of Alaska's veterans and military history. The military has played a major role in Alaska's development from the Alaska Purchase to the present. There are a wide range of artifacts, archival, aircraft, and other materials which should be preserved as a record of the military influence in Alaska and the role of Alaskans in the military. There can be no question of the contribution of the pioneers. What Alaska is today is a direct result of what they contributed. We strongly support the concept of the expansion of the state's ability to preserve this segment of Alaska's heritage.

Concerns

Establishment of new and thematic museums by the state should be part of a carefully planned expansion. In addition to this proposal, for a Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Museum, last year a maritime museum was proposed and there is a possibility that a "living museum" or nature interpretive center will be proposed in the near future. A broad look at the thematic areas needing expansion or establishment should be taken. Of particular importance is their relationship to existing museum services. Areas of collection and program presentation should be most carefully delineated so that unnecessary overlap is eliminated and competing state funded museums are not created. For instance, almost all museums in Alaska will have material relating to the pioneers. The smaller museums focus primarily on the local pioneer's contribution to development. At the state level, museums focus on the broader picture of the total state. The Transportation Museum of Alaska, Inc. located in Palmer is the custodian of a fairly large collection of historical transportation artifacts which belong to the State of Alaska as well as many additional ones which are a part of their own collection. The relationship between the Transportation Museum and the proposed military museum, especially in the light of the interest in historic aircraft, should be carefully studied before embarking on the establishment of the new museum.

Senate Bill 316 places a commission in the Office of the Governor. This is counter to the apparent desire of the Governor's Office to have program activities administered by departments who are assigned that responsibility. Several agencies have recently been moved from

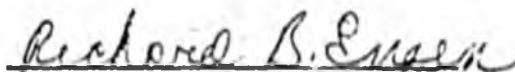
the Office of the Governor by Executive Order, such as the Historical Commission and the State Council on the Arts to the Department of Education. It would seem desirable to have the proposed new museum placed within the Department of Education also where it directly relates to the State Museum. One alternative might be to expand the membership of the statutory five member Museum Collections Advisory Committee of the State Museum (AS 14.57.020) to add additional representation specifically for other subject areas including veterans and pioneers rather than to establish a separate commission.

Recommendation

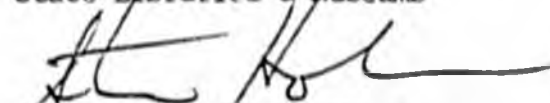
Rather than taking action on the bills this year, \$25,000 could be added to the State Museum Operating Budget to fund a task force to address the programmatic and administrative development of thematic museums and specifically the Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Museum. The task force should represent the museum profession of the state as well as those individuals and groups with specific interest in the subject areas. The funds would primarily be used for travel to bring the task force members and interested individuals together to jointly address these issues. It would also include some travel to existing museums outside in order to focus on the best potentials for development of these areas. The task force would present its report to the 2nd. Session of the 12th Legislature in January, 1982.

Providing for statewide input and preparing a multi-year plan for implementation of expansion of museum subject activities will be the most efficient and powerful method to address the emerging needs to present the people of the state and its visitors the history of the culture and development of Alaska.

Because the programs envisioned by the bills have not been fully developed no formal fiscal note has been prepared.



Richard B. Engen, Director
State Libraries & Museums



Steve Hole, Administrator
Department of Education