

HJR

58

HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NEXT COMMITTEE: RULES

BILL: HJR 58

CURRENT VERSION: SS HJR 58

SCHEDULED: MARCH 28, 1988

SPONSOR: WALLIS

PHONE NO: 3732

CONTACT FILE: \_\_\_\_\_

BILL SUBJECT: RELATING TO THE RETURN OF HUMAN REMAINS FROM THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

SPONSOR BACKUP: RETURN TO WHERE/MUSEUM?

AFFECTED AGENCIES:

<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT/PHONE</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
EDUCATION	STATE MUSEUM/TOM LONNER	SUPPORTS SS HJR 58

FISCAL NOTES

<u>AGENCY</u>	<u>REQUESTED</u>	<u>DATED</u>	<u>FY 88 AMT</u>	<u>FY 89 AMT</u>
EDUCATION	3/4/88	3/8/88	-0-	-0-

ACTION

<u>DATE</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
3/28/88	PASSED FROM STATE AFFAIRS

# HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(7)

Date referred: 3/21/88

FURTHER REFERRALS:

DATE: 3-28-88

The State Affairs Committee has considered SSHJR 58

Relating to the return of human remains from the Smithsonian Institution.

**RECOMMENDS:**

- replace with \_\_\_\_\_  the same title
- attached amendment(s)  a new title
- do pass
- do not pass
- no recommendation
- individual recommendations
- additional referral to the \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

**ADOPTS:**  \_\_\_\_\_ letter of intent

**ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):**

- fiscal impact  same as previous fiscal note published \_\_\_\_\_
- zero fiscal note  same as previous zero fiscal note published \_\_\_\_\_
- zero with analysis

**SIGNING DO PASS:**

*[Handwritten signatures: J. W. ...]*  
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**SIGNING OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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Chairman's signature



Official Business

# Alaska State Legislature

## House

P.O. BOX V  
State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

### M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Representative Fran Ulmer, Chair  
House State Affairs Committee

FROM: Representative F. Kay Wallis *fkw*  
District 24

DATE: February 18, 1988

SUBJ: Scheduling of House Joint Resolution 58

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Please consider placing House Joint Resolution 58 on the House State Affairs Committee agenda as soon as possible.

HJR 58 requests that the Smithsonian Institution return to Alaska human remains that were collected from Native villages here around the turn of the century.

This resolution is introduced to encourage the Smithsonian Institution to be helpful and responsive to people from Alaska requesting information about, or return of, the remains of their families that are now in storage or on display in the Smithsonian museums.

This resolution was drafted in response to requests for help from people in my district who had encountered difficulties in recovering the remains of their families.

We recognize that the Smithsonian Institution is already working on identifying the human remains in their collection that date from the turn of the century in order to attempt to return them when possible. However, we feel they need to be reminded of how important this issue is to our people.

Thank you.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS  
ON  
SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 58

What is the purpose of this resolution?

The purpose of SSHJR 58 is to encourage the Smithsonian Institution to be more responsive to individuals and tribal organizations requesting the return of human remains taken from their families or regions in Alaska around the turn of the century.

To whom will the remains be returned?

The sponsor substitute for HJR 58 makes it clear that human remains, now on display or in storage at the Smithsonian, will be returned to families or tribal organizations (genetic and cultural descendants) that request them.

What will happen to the remains?

While this is a private matter to be determined by the descendants, most remains will probably be given a proper and permanent burial.

Is there a fiscal impact on the State of Alaska?

SSHJR 58 has a zero fiscal note.

What is the extent of the Smithsonian's collection of remains?

It is estimated that the Smithsonian has skeletons of over 14,000 American Indians, including the remains of four to six thousand Alaskan Natives. Many of these were taken unsystematically and unethically from village graves or were bought from people who had no right to sell them. Because of the way they were collected, most of the remains are of limited scientific value.

Does SSHJR 58 address archaeological human remains?

No. These remains, hundreds to thousands of years old, were recovered through archaeological excavations, and many are of scientific value.

When and how was the material addressed by SSHJR 58 collected?

Between the mid 1800's and the early 1900's, dozens of military and scientific expeditions collected geological, botanical, zoological, and anthropological materials throughout Alaska.

While the Smithsonian rarely sponsored these expeditions, many expeditions collected items specifically for the Smithsonian as part of their activities. Many other collections including human remains were either purchased by or donated to the Smithsonian Institution at a later time.

Is the Smithsonian doing anything about the human remains in its collections?

Like most major museums, the Smithsonian is aware of the increasing concern about human remains in their displays and collections. They have created a printout of the human remains in their collections and sent this list to tribes throughout the nation. Their policy is to "establish a dialogue" with anyone who believes that the remains of their relatives are in the Smithsonian's collections, but like most museums, the Smithsonian is reluctant to lose materials from its collections.

If the Smithsonian is already working on this, why do we need a resolution?

Perhaps because of its age and size, the Smithsonian Institution has become a huge bureaucracy. The terminology of Smithsonian officials may be difficult for our village people to understand, but the message is clear. It is very discouraging to those who would like to have the remains of their families returned.

Native Alaskans who can overcome the difficulties of language barriers, expensive telephone calls, and slow mail deserve a more helpful and sympathetic response from the Smithsonian Institution. The purpose of this resolution is to encourage the Smithsonian to be more responsive to requests from Alaska to have human remains restored to their families and sites of origin.

STATE OF ALASKA  
1988 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL VERSION: HJR 58  
PUBLISH DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

FISCAL NOTE

REQUEST:

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Affected: Education  
Title: Relating to the return of human BRU: Alaska State Museum  
remains from the Smithsonian Institution.  
Sponsor: Wallis Components: Museum operations  
Requestor: House State Affairs

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 88	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	0	0	0	0	0	0
CAPITAL						
REVENUE						

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL						

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS : (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: Mary Hakala Phone: 465-2800  
Division: Commissioner's Office Date: 3-3-88  
Approved by Commissioner Mary Hakala Date: 3-3-88  
Agency: Department of Education

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