

HJR

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REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT OGAN

Alaska State Legislature

House District 27 • Palmer • Greater Palmer • Sutton • Chickaloon • Sheep Mountain

SPONSOR STATEMENT HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 62

A Resolution has been drafted to bring Balto "home" to Alaska.

A combined second and third grade class wrote letters to me requesting my help on having Balto returned from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. This was inspired by a third grade student who read a book on the brave dog team that brought the much needed diphtheria serum to Nome in the mid-1920's.

If the preservation of the past is to have the most effect in helping us keep a full perspective on the significance of historical events the preservation should be kept as close to the genesis of the event as possible. The question is, where is Balto most valuable and in what ways can his preservation best serve people.

I believe the answer is by being here in Alaska where others may draw inspiration in the continuation of the celebrated trek to Nome called the Iditarod race, which he along with other members of his team have inspired. It is here the world turns its attention each year to commemorate Balto's feat. It is here the famous lead dog will have the most profound effect on the world and what the significance of the serum run still means.

January 23, 1998

Dear Representative Ogan,

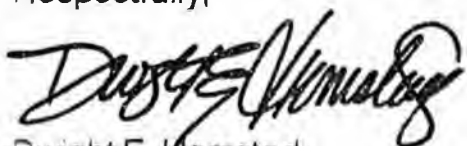
I teach a second and third grade combined class at Butte Elementary school in the Matanuska Susitna Borough School District. My third grade students are required to complete quarterly oral book responses as a way of developing reading, writing, and public speaking skills. One of the students, Cody McGinn, read and completed a project on the book entitled Five True Dog Stories. One of the stories was about Balto and his efforts in getting the much needed dyptheria serum to Nome back in the mid-1920's. Cody had learned that the dog, Balto, had been mounted by a taxidermist but was now being kept in the archives of a museum in Cleveland, Ohio. Cody questioned why the dog was in Ohio when his 'home' and the setting for his heroic actions was here in Alaska. He then stated that he thought it would be a good idea to bring Balto home to Alaska.

The students in the classroom readily grabbed on to the idea. We did some brainstorming to develop a plan to attempt to get Balto back to Alaska. Writing to you was one of the ideas the students came up with, hence the letters that are enclosed. We have contacted the Iditarod Headquarters Museum in Wasilla, Alaska, and they are very excited about the prospect of housing Balto there. It seems a most appropriate place for Balto to be honored.

I'm not sure what type of support you may be able to lend us, but the students' hearts are definitely into this project. If you can offer any advice or suggestions we would be most grateful. I'd like to be certain that we have the resources needed to move Balto up here before we contact the museum in Cleveland. Once we receive your input and have the resources available, then the students will once more put pen to paper and write the museum in Cleveland.

We appreciate your time and attention to this matter. We are looking forward to hearing from you very soon.

Respectfully,



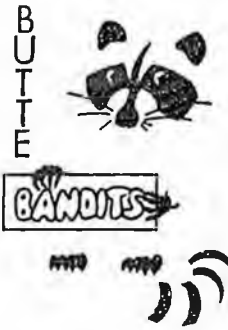
Dwight E. Homstad
Butte Elementary School
610 Cope Industrial Way
Palmer, AK 99645
907-745-4871

BUTTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

690 COPE INDUSTRIAL WAY

PALMER, ALASKA 99645

(907) 745-4871



Greg Miller, Principal

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

1-22-98

Dear Rep. Dean,

Our class is going to bring Balto back to Alaska where he was born, or that's what we want to do. Did you know that Balto is in Ohio? I think that to bring Balto back is a good idea because he was born in Alaska. Will you help us bring him back? Thank you for bringing him back if you do.

Sincerely,

Katie Piskura

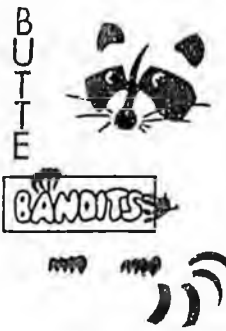
3rd Grade.

BUTTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

690 COPE INDUSTRIAL WAY

PALMER, ALASKA 99645

(907) 745-4871



Greg Miller, Principal

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

1-22-98

Dear Rep. Ogan,

Our class wants Balto to come back to Alaska. We want to bring him back because he is in the bottom of a museum in Cleveland, Ohio and noone really thinks about him down there. We would put him in the Wasilla Iditarod Museum. If you could help us get enough money Can you help us? Thank you for your time and help.

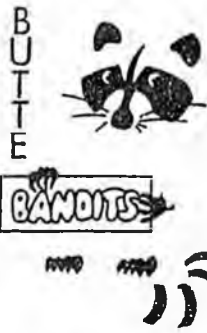
Sincerely,
Stephanie House
Grade-3. 8 years

BUTTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

690 COPE INDUSTRIAL WAY

PALMER, ALASKA 99645

(907) 745-4871



Greg Miller, Principal

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

1-22-93

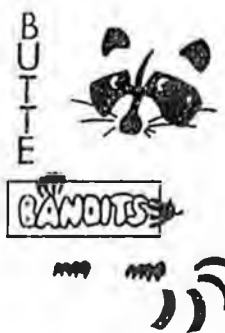
Dear Rep. Ogan,

How are you doing? Our class is trying to bring Balto back to Alaska because Ohio barely get any snow and whoever heard of the Iditarod down in Ohio because there is hardly any snow in Ohio! We are wondering if you can do any thing to help us in bringing Balto back.

Thank you for helping us!

Sincerely,
Shannon Abrell
Grade 3

BUTTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
690 COPE INDUSTRIAL WAY
PALMER, ALASKA 99645
(907) 745-4871



Greg Miller, Principal

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

1-22-9

Dear Rep. Ogan,

Our class thought it would be better for Balto to be in Alaska in the Wasilla Museum. Why our class is doing it, because Balto became a hero up here. And so we were wondering if you could help get some money or something. If you could help please do. Thank you.

Your friend,
Gia Homstad Grade 2

BUTTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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PALMER, ALASKA 99645

(907) 745-4871

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BANDITS



Greg Miller, Principal

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

Dear Rep. Ogan,

1-22-98

Our class wants to bring Balto back to Alaska. I think we should bring Balto back to Alaska because some children want to see Balto back to Alaska instead of just seeing his statue of Liberty. I think you could probably help us get Balto back to Alaska. Thank you for helping us.

Sincerely, Kaile Lewis 3 Grade

BUTTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

690 COPE INDUSTRIAL WAY

PALMER, ALASKA 99645

(907) 745-4871



Greg Miller, Principal

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

112219

Dear Rep. Ogan,

Our class wants to bring Balto back to Alaska. We want to bring Balto back because the race was not in Ohio. Balto is down in a Museum in Ohio. We are writing to you because we want you to help us get him. I appreciate you helping us.

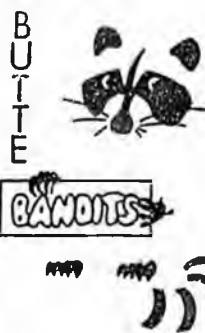
Sincerely,
Kelsey Tanner
Grade 3

BUTTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

690 COPE INDUSTRIAL WAY

PALMER, ALASKA 99645

(907) 745-4871



Greg Miller, Principal

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

1-22-98

Dear, Rep. Ogan

OUR class is trying to get Balto back. We want to put him in the Wasill Museum. If you are wondering why he should be up here it is because all of it happened here. So we were wondering

Danny
African
graded

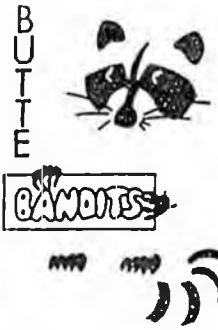
If you could help us.
Good by thank you very
much.

BUTTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

690 COPE INDUSTRIAL WAY

PALMER, ALASKA 99645

(907) 745-4871



Greg Miller, Principal

Mutanuska-Susitna Borough School District

1-22-91

Dear Rep. Conroy
I am trying
to get a field base
he ran the race in Alaska
Is there anything
you can do? Thank
Rep. Conroy
Sincerely,
[Signature]

Forrestman
March 20, 1998

Students fight to bring Balto home

By MELANIE BRUBAKER MAZUR
Frontiersman reporter

Students at Butte Elementary School are studying state government first hand. With the help of the Alaska State Legislature, they're trying to bring the preserved body of Iditarod dog hero Balto home to Alaska from Cleveland.

Four students testified Wednesday via speakerphone before the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee in favor of a legislative resolution urging Balto's return.

"If you asked Balto, he'd rather be here than in Ohio," Katie Piskura said. She was joined by three other students, Cody McGinn, Gia Homstad and Seina Johndro. Classmate Annie Rowland also was in the audience, along with several siblings and parents.

"He saved a lot of Alaskans and was born here and became a hero," Gia said. "The story started here."

The students have been researching Balto's saga in Dwight Homstad's class since this fall.

After completing the life-saving diphtheria serum run to Nome in 1925, Balto and other members of the dog team were sold to a sideshow in California. When school children in Cleveland learned of the dogs' plight, they began saving pennies and nickels, collecting enough to buy the team and bring it to Cleveland. Balto and his six teammates lived in the Cleveland Zoo. When Balto died, he was stuffed and is kept in Cleveland at the Museum of Natural History.

'If you asked Balto, he'd rather be here than in Ohio.'

Katie Piskura

Togo, musher Leonhard Seppala's lead dog, also is preserved and is on display at the Iditarod headquarters here in Wasilla. Seppala mushed 260 miles to bring the serum to Nome, the longest distance of any of the mushers in the relay.

Cody sparked his classmates' interest in Balto when he did a report on the heroic dogs.

After learning of Balto's plight, the Butte students began writing letters and trying to find support to bring Balto home.

Gia's father, Homstad, was pleased with his students' carefully prepared statements to the legislators.

"I think they did great," he said. "I was really pleased."

Rep. Ivan Ivan, D-Akiak, who chairs the House committee, asked the students if they would be willing to share Balto with students in Nome. The Butte students replied they would.

Rep. Scott Ogan, R-Palmer, explained to the students the committee would pass the resolution and move it to the floor of the House.

Then the same process will take place on the Senate side. If the Senate passes the resolution, it goes into effect because the governor's approval is not required for legislative resolutions.

Because the hearing was during spring break, only a few students were able to attend. When the resolution goes before the



MELANIE BRUBAKER MAZUR

Butte Elementary School student Cody McGinn, 10, testifies Wednesday at the Legislative Information Office in Wasilla with support from his mother, Shelly McGinn, and his classmates are requesting a resolution from the Legislature that Iditarod dog hero Balto be returned to Alaska. LIO Information Officer Mary Kvalheim, right, supports students through the process.

Senate, Homstad plans to bring his whole class of second- and third-grade students to the Legislative Information Office.

The mushers and dogs who made the serum run to Nome were considered heroes, but in later years, interest in the event waned. Steven Spielberg's 1995 animated film "A Race for Life: Balto and the Hero Dogs of Alaska" revived interest in the dog and the historic serum run.

Although Balto's body has been mostly in storage since his death, the renewed interest earned Balto a four-month appearance in a 1996 display at the Cleveland museum.