

SB

136

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



Senator John Torgerson, Chair
Senator Drue Pearce, Vice Chair
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Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 136 - Resource Development Board

SB 136 will establish the Resource Development Board, which will be tasked with the primary duties of facilitating public education and promoting responsible resource development. The board will have the authority to award grants to private nonprofit corporations for projects such as conducting marketing research, advertising, publishing, and distributing information related to responsible resource extraction. The Board will establish standards for reviewing proposals and setting terms and conditions for the use of the grants. Grants will be awarded from the Resource Development Fund, which will be created within the general fund and will be subject to legislative appropriation from revenues received from the extraction of the state's natural resources.

In his annual address to the Legislature, Senator Frank Murkowski advised that "The state must do its part to promote economic development of its own lands, irrespective of the prevailing federal attitude and political landscape at the federal level."

SB 136 represents an investment in Alaska's future. Alaska has been, and will be, dependent on natural resource extraction to fuel our economic engine for the foreseeable future. We need to continue to promote responsible development of our resources while protecting the environment. The best way to protect Alaska's environment is to have a strong, diversified economy. The majority of the environmental groups, apparently, do not agree with this concept as they continue to oppose nearly all development while offering no alternative economic plan. Alaska's environmental protection laws are among the strongest in the world, yet, by opposing development of Alaska's natural resources, environmentalists push development offshore to third world countries assuring exploitative development in the absence of adequate environmental protection laws.

There are now more than 90 environmental groups with offices in Alaska and the vast majority of their money comes from the lower 48. These organizations spend millions of dollars in Alaska attempting to sway public opinion, drive public policy, and inhibit the development of our natural resources. Because of the virtually unlimited funds available to these environmental groups, Alaska based resource development advocates are unable to compete effectively in presenting a balanced message to the public and are overwhelmed by a one-sided message. SB 136 will provide assistance in disseminating a balanced message regarding responsible resource development.

Alaska invests in marketing our tourism and seafood industries and in supporting the opening of ANWR to petroleum exploration in order to benefit our economy. We also need to invest in the promotion of our diverse mineral resources, timber, and oil and gas development.

Creating the Resource Development Board will promote responsible resource development in Alaska and assist us in meeting our constitutional mandate of developing our resources by making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest.

Alaska Forest Association, Inc.



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March 13, 2001

The Honorable Drue Pearce
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol, Room 119
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Re: Senate Bill 136 establishing the Resource Development Board

Dear Senator Pearce,

Thank you for introducing Senate Bill 136 which creates a Resource Development Board facilitating promotion of responsible resource development in Alaska. The Alaska Forest Association (AFA) is the non-profit trade association for the forest products industry in Alaska. AFA represents more than 200 companies directly and indirectly involved in the timber industry.

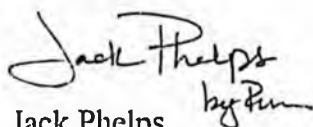
Whether timber, mining, oil, or tourism, a healthy Alaska economy depends on careful use of its natural resources. Investing a portion of the revenue from resource activity in Alaska to educate and advocate environmentally sound resource use makes good sense. The AFA fully supports SB 136.

The environmental industry, which increasingly makes its money by creating and maintaining conflicts, finds Alaska easy prey. Millions of dollars spent annually by the 'conflict' industry plead with the world to "save Alaska" because it's the "last best place on earth." Alaska has much more to offer the United States and the world than just being, "the last best place on earth." The problem is further exacerbated by Alaska's unprecedented land status which creates a unique situation in which non-resident U.S. citizens have a say in the management or mismanagement of Alaska.

The Resource Development Board, set up by SB 136, will help Alaskans educate the world about its abundant natural resources. Projects funded through this Board will also demonstrate that we extract our natural resources in a responsible and earth-friendly manner allowing Alaska to remain "the best place on earth" while providing the valuable resources used to make products we all use daily.

The AFA strongly supports SB 136 which represents a positive investment in Alaska's economic future. Thank you for introducing this important legislation. Should you have any questions concerning any of these comments, please contact me at (907) 225-6114.

Sincerely,


Jack Phelps
Executive Director