

HB

37

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

House Bill 37

**“An Act establishing the first Saturday of every March as
Susan Butcher Day.”**

No one exemplified the ideals of Alaska better than Susan Howlett Butcher. Resourceful, self-reliant, generous, adventuresome, and tough, Susan was the worldwide face of not just Alaska's state sport of dog mushing but of the Great Land itself. As the Twenty-fourth Alaska Legislature noted in its Citation In Memoriam, her death August 5, 2006 was as if one of the stars had fallen from Alaska's flag.

HB 37 honors Susan Butcher by establishing a ceremonial state holiday in her name on the traditional start date of the Iditarod Trail sled dog race.

Susan came to Alaska in 1974. She flourished in the wilderness, learning the ways of Alaska's first people, scrimping and saving to build a dog team, and loving Alaska ever more deeply with each passing season. The Iditarod Trail sled dog race became her passion. She amassed twelve top five Iditarod finishes; no one has dominated the race since. In races and her near-constant training in preparation for them, Susan faced magnificent but rugged, unforgiving terrain, rampaging moose, stubborn bison, and howling Arctic storms with a potent combination of physical strength, mental discipline, and an indomitable positive attitude. That combination led to championships in 1986, 1987, 1988, and 1990. More people have walked on the moon than have won the Iditarod four times.

Susan became a widely hailed sports hero, role model, and mushing icon, but the world's most famous dog musher never strayed from her down-to-earth approach to life and its challenges. It is her smile – a brilliant, joyous, infectious smile – Alaskans will miss most. When Susan unleashed that grin, it revealed the self-confident delight of someone who was living exactly as she wanted, someone always ready to share her joy with her fellow travelers on planet Earth.

HB 37 seeks to perpetuate her memory and remind all Alaskans of this Alaskan hero and the lofty ideals she symbolized. I urge your support of HB 37.

**A Citation
By The Alaska State Legislature
In Memoriam
Susan Howlett Butcher**

The Twenty-fourth Alaska Legislature joins in mourning the death of Susan Howlett Butcher. A true Alaskan, she was smart, tough, unpretentious, and epitomized the independent spirit of the north. She sharpened competitive dog mushing and came to symbolize it so thoroughly, her image became synonymous with the state's signature sport and even Alaska itself. Her loss to leukemia is as if one of the stars has fallen from Alaska's flag.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts December 26, 1954, Susan came to Alaska in 1974, fulfilling a first grade essay she wrote that simply said "I hate the city. I love the country." She flourished in the wilderness, learning the ways of Alaska's first people, scrimping and saving to build a dog team, and loving Alaska ever more deeply.

The Iditarod Trail sled dog race became her passion. In races and her near-constant training in preparation for them, Susan faced rugged, magnificent terrain, rampaging moose, stubborn buffalo, and howling Arctic storms with a potent combination of physical strength, mental discipline, and an indomitable positive attitude. That combination led to championships in 1986, 1987, 1988, and 1990. She amassed twelve top five Iditarod finishes; no one has so dominated the race since. "I do not know the word 'quit'," she said. "Either I never did or I have somehow abolished it from my language." She and Iditarod founder Joe Redington, Sr. were the first and only mushers to take a dog team to the summit of Mt. McKinley.

Susan became a widely hailed sports hero, role model, and mushing icon, but the world's most famous dog musher never strayed from her down-to-earth approach to life and its challenges. Worldwide media coverage tried to portray her as a remarkable feminist, but she would have none of it. "Yes, I am a woman, and yes it is a victory for me to win the Iditarod," she said, "but it *isn't* amazing – I did it because I am capable, and women are capable."

It is her smile – a brilliant, joyous, infectious smile – Alaskans will miss most. When Susan unleashed that grin, it revealed the self-confident delight of someone who was living exactly as she wanted, someone always ready to share her joy with her fellow travelers on planet Earth. Her last entry in the journal of her medical treatment concluded, "...I feel blessed to have the strength to walk and the companionship of David and others on these walks." All Alaskans are grateful Susan walked among us, even for far too short a time.

Susan Butcher died in Seattle August 5, 2006. She was preceded in death by her parents, and her brother Evan, who died at age 3 of the same disease that claimed her life. She is survived by her husband David Monson, daughters Tekla and Chisana, and legions of friends and fans around the world. She will be greatly missed.

Alaska's Designated Days of Honor

Title 44. Chapter 12. Article 02. DESIGNATED DAYS OF HONOR

Sec. 44.12.030. Wickersham Day.

August 24 is designated Wickersham Day in honor of James Wickersham, and is the occasion for school assemblies with appropriate programs, and other suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public in general.

Sec. 44.12.040. Anthony J. Dimond Day.

November 30 is designated Anthony J. Dimond Day in honor of "Tony" Dimond, and shall be observed by appropriate school assemblies and programs, and other suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public at large.

Sec. 44.12.045. Martin Luther King Day. [Repealed, Sec. 3 ch 109 SLA 1989].

Repealed or Renumbered

Sec. 44.12.050. Ernest Gruening Day.

Ernest Gruening Day is established on February 6 of each year to honor Ernest Gruening, doctor, editor, and statesman, for a lifetime of service to the territory and state of Alaska and the nation. Ernest Gruening Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.055. Bob Bartlett Day.

Bob Bartlett Day is established on April 20 of each year to honor E.L. "Bob" Bartlett, the "architect of Alaska statehood," for a lifetime of public service to Alaska and the nation. Bob Bartlett Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.060. William A. Egan Day.

William A. Egan Day is established on October 8 of each year to honor William "Bill" Egan, the first governor of the state of Alaska, for a lifetime of service to the territory and state of Alaska. William A. Egan Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.065. Elizabeth Peratrovich Day.

Elizabeth Peratrovich Day is established on February 16 of each year to honor Elizabeth Peratrovich, past Grand President of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, for her courageous,

unceasing efforts to eliminate discrimination and bring about equal rights in Alaska. Elizabeth Peratrovich Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.070. Alaska Flag Day.

Alaska Flag Day is established on July 9 of each year to honor the creation of the design of the official flag of the state by Benny Benson and its importance as a symbol of the state. Alaska Flag Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.072. Alaska Day of Prayer.

The Alaska Day of Prayer is established on the first Thursday in May each year as an opportunity for residents of all faiths to join in united prayer to give thanks for blessings received, to request healing for wounds endured, to ask divine guidance for our leaders, and to bring wholeness to the citizens of our state and our nation.

Sec. 44.12.075. Family day and family preservation month.

Family Day is established on May 1 of each year to celebrate the institution of the family. The month of May each year is established as Preservation of the Family Month to encourage the preservation of the institution of the family. Family Day and Preservation of the Family Month may be observed by suitable observances by families, such as a family discussion of the role of families, the rights and responsibilities of children and parents, and appropriate methods for the resolution of violent feelings in family conflict, and by exercises by civic groups and the public. In observance of Family Preservation Month, the Department of Health and Social Services shall encourage the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Alaska families.

Sec. 44.12.076. Prisoners of War and Missing in Action Recognition Days.

(a) Former Prisoners of War Recognition Day is established on April 9 of each year to recognize and honor all former prisoners of war (POWs) from our nation's wars who have returned home. These POWs repeatedly demonstrated their devotion to duty, honor, and country, despite enduring captivity and sometimes brutal treatment by their captors. The governor shall issue a proclamation to commemorate the day, and the POW/MIA flag shall be flown that day at sites identified by the governor. Former POW Recognition Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

(b) Prisoners of War and Missing in Action Recognition Day is established on the third Friday of September each year to honor all prisoners of war (POWs) and those missing in action (MIAs), unaccounted for from all our nation's wars or who died in captivity. These POWs and MIAs repeatedly demonstrated their devotion to duty, honor, and country, despite enduring captivity and sometimes brutal treatment by their captors.

The fate of those unaccounted for and missing in action from our nation's wars causes considerable uncertainty for their families, friends, fellow soldiers, and veterans. This day is also an occasion for Alaskans to remember our country's enormous responsibility to do everything possible to account for those still missing in action. The governor shall issue a proclamation to commemorate the day, and the POW/MIA flag shall be flown that day at sites identified by the governor. POW and MIA Recognition Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.078. Women Veterans Day.

Women Veterans Day is established on November 9 of each year to acknowledge and commemorate the sacrifices endured and valor displayed by American women veterans and to recognize their increasing role in the military. The governor shall issue a proclamation to commemorate Women Veterans Day. The day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.080. Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.

Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day is established on December 7 of each year to commemorate the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and to honor the individuals who died as a result of the attack. The governor shall issue a proclamation to commemorate the day and shall direct that the Alaska flag be flown at half-mast on that day. Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.083. Alaska Territorial Guard Day.

Alaska Territorial Guard Day is established on October 18 of each year to acknowledge and commemorate the service of the members of the Alaska Territorial Guard in defense of Alaska and the United States during World War II. The governor shall issue a proclamation to commemorate Alaska Territorial Guard Day. The day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.085. Dutch Harbor Remembrance Day.

Dutch Harbor Remembrance Day is established on June 3 of each year to commemorate the attack on Dutch Harbor on June 3, 1942, and to honor the individuals who died as a result of the attack and those inhabitants of Attu and Kiska who fell into enemy hands three days later and were held captive in Japan until the end of World War II. On Dutch Harbor Remembrance Day the many servicemen who died in 1943 while recapturing Attu and Kiska from the Japanese are also honored for their diligent service to the United States and to the state. The governor shall issue a proclamation to commemorate Dutch Harbor Remembrance Day and shall direct that the Alaska flag be flown at half-mast on that day. The day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.090. Juneteenth Day.

Juneteenth Day is established on the third Saturday in June each year to commemorate the abolition of slavery throughout the United States and its territories in 1865. The governor shall issue a proclamation to commemorate the day. On Juneteenth Day, citizens of the state are urged to reflect on the suffering endured by early African-Americans and to appreciate the unique freedom and equality enjoyed by all state citizens today.

Sec. 44.12.095. Drunk Driving Victims Remembrance Day.

Drunk Driving Victims Remembrance Day is established on July 3 of each year to commemorate the victims of drunk driving. The governor shall issue a proclamation to commemorate the day. The day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Sec. 44.12.098. Avalanche Awareness Month.

The month of November each year is established as Avalanche Awareness Month. Avalanche Awareness Month may be observed by schools, community groups, and other public and private agencies and individuals with appropriate activities that increase the public's awareness of avalanche dangers, how to respond to avalanches, and the use of appropriate equipment in avalanche areas.

Sec. 44.12.100. Older Alaskans' Day.

The second Wednesday of September of each year is established as Older Alaskans' Day to honor residents of the state who are 60 years of age or older for the many contributions made by older Alaskans to the state. The day may be celebrated by public ceremonies and by quiet appreciation.

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District 8

The Honorable Bob Lynn, Chair
House of State Affairs Committee
Alaska House of Representatives
Alaska State Capitol, Suite 104
Juneau, AK 99801

January 19, 2007

Dear Representative Lynn:

Please consider this as my formal request for your committee to hear House Bill 37, which establishes the first Saturday in every March as Susan Butcher Day in Alaska. I hope you will agree with me that this is a suitable bill with which to begin this first session of the Twenty-fifth Alaska Legislature. This simple measure carries a zero fiscal note and enjoys broad public and bipartisan legislative support. HB 37 is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate lawmakers' ability to work together and act quickly.

Ideally, the full Legislature will pass this measure in time for the start of this year's Iditarod Trail sled dog race on March 3, 2007. The Iditarod Trail Committee's planned special ceremony honoring Susan that day would be the perfect opportunity for Governor Palin to sign this bill into law. As yours is the only committee of referral in the House, I hope you'll see your way clear to schedule a hearing at your earliest possible opportunity.

I look forward to working with you and your committee and ask for your favorable consideration of HB 37.

Best regards,


Representative David Guttenberg