

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senator Gary Stevens

SPONSOR STATEMENT

SENATE BILL 71

Alaska State Council on the Arts

Senate Bill 71 was introduced at the request of the Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA).

ASCA is the state arts agency for Alaska, and exists to promote the creation, enjoyment, and practice of the arts by all Alaskans.

ASCA was founded in 1966 by passage of its enabling legislation by the 4th Alaska State Legislature. In 2017 the 30th State Legislature passed House Bill 137, which re-designated ASCA as a public corporation and governmental instrumentality of the State of Alaska and restructured the agency. In 2019 ASCA was shut down for several months following the veto of all its funding in late June. The Legislature restored funding in July, and the funds remained in the budget signed into law in August 2019.

When ASCA re-opened following the period of time in which the agency was not in operation, its Board of Trustees sought out ways in which operations could be improved. Some of the possible changes they identified require statutory changes. SB 71 contains four discrete provisions which are meant to allow for more stable operations of the ASCA.

First, SB 71 would attach a surcharge to the highly successful Alaska Artistic License Plate Program launched with the passage of SB 154 by the 29th State Legislature (2016), and modified by the passage of SB 204 in the 30th Legislature (2018). The bill would allow ASCA to set the amount of the surcharge in an amount not to exceed \$50 as a means of generating income to help support ASCA's operations.

Second, this legislation clarifies ASCA's management responsibility for public artwork created through its programs, to include the management of the relocation, disposition, or exchange of such artwork.

Third, this legislation would codify the existing practice of the Department of Law serving as legal counsel for ASCA. This comports with normal operating procedures for agencies of the State of Alaska.

Fourth, SB 71 provides ASCA with the means to maintain and strengthen its partnerships with non-profit foundation supporters, which have been very successful in recent years, and which now result in over half of ASCA's operating budget coming from non-governmental sources. The statutory changes proposed in SB 71 would hold harmless, ASCA's private-sector fund raising efforts in the state budget process.

Thank you for your consideration of this important piece of legislation.