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REPRESENTATIVE JOHN COGHILL

[HB 304](#) SPONSOR STATEMENT

The Jack Coghill Bridge to the Interior

In 1961, State House Representative Jack Coghill was working on state funding to build a bridge over the Nenana River just south of Nenana at Rex. Part of the difficulty in getting funding for this bridge was that no roads were going to or coming from the area at the time. However, Jack knew that if a bridge was built, roads would soon connect the Interior to Southcentral Alaska.

The idea of a bridge with no connecting roads was so humorous, that some of the legislators called it "Jack Coghill's Bridge to Nowhere." Despite the criticism, Mr. Coghill held that the road would soon become a thoroughfare between Fairbanks and Anchorage. Mr. Coghill was successful in getting the funding, and once the appropriations for the bridge were made, it was built in record time. Soon after construction was completed, just as planned, roads to and from the bridge were built. Because of Mr. Coghill's efforts, the travel time between Anchorage and Fairbanks was cut from twelve hours to six, and the citizens of Alaska continue to benefit from the increased access that the bridge has provided.

Bridge #216, which currently has no name, crosses the Nenana River at the area called "Rex Crossing." At the frequent suggestion of my son Joshua, and other close friends of my father, I would like to name the bridge the "Jack Coghill Bridge to the Interior" to commemorate the contributions of one of Alaska's great citizens. Jack Coghill has served the state in various positions throughout the twentieth century:

Territorial legislature member
Alaska Constitutional Convention member
State House Representative
State Senator
Lieutenant Governor under Walter Hickel

His visionary ideas, years of service to Alaska, and longtime citizenship of the Nenana community are worthy of honor.