

SPONSOR STATEMENT HOUSE BILL 96

“An Act relating to acquisition and development of the Jesse Lee Home; and providing for an effective date.”

The Jesse Lee Home for Children is located in Seward, Alaska, and is rich in cultural history.

The home was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995 for the critical role it played in serving the health care and educational needs of Alaska Native children orphaned during a wave of devastating epidemics. John Ben (Benny) Benson Jr. had a vision to design a symbol for Alaska while residing at the Jesse Lee Home. That vision became the Alaska State Flag.

The Jesse Lee Home site was honored as the location for the first official raising of the Alaska State flag on July 9, 1927. The home also housed American soldiers during World War II.

The intent of this legislation is to have an advisory committee determine the costs and procedures necessary for the State of Alaska to acquire, develop, and manage the Jesse Lee Home property. The Jesse Lee Home was badly damaged by the 1964 earthquake. It is hoped the property will be acquired by the State and managed in a manner that recognizes its place in the State’s history because of the flag raising, and honoring Benny Benson for his role in designing the Alaska State flag.