

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## SESSION

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## SENATOR BERT K. STEDMAN

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### SPONSOR STATEMENT SB 291

**“An Act relating to the municipal harbor facility grant program; and providing for an effective date.”**

For Alaskan coastal communities, harbors are their road to resources. Harbors are critical transportation links, hubs of waterfront commerce that many businesses depend on and protection areas for ocean going vessels.

Over the past 10 years, the Department of Transportation has transferred ownership of state harbors to 22 municipalities around Alaska’s coast. In many instances the state had neglected its responsibility for conducting major preventative maintenance on those harbors. Although funds accompanied the transfers, the funds were insufficient to bring the harbors up to safe and serviceable condition. Accordingly, when local harbor masters took over the budgeting for their facilities they inherited a major financial burden that their local governments could not afford.

In 2005 the Statewide Harbor Masters Association met to find a solution to the approximately \$99,858,000 in needed repairs. They brought forward a proposal for a 50/50 matching grant program. That proposal is reflected in Senate Bill 291.

SB 291 establishes the Municipal Harbor Facility Grant Fund and a 50/50 capital matching funding program administered by the Department of Transportation. The bill sets out strict criteria to determine project eligibility. For example the application must be for a capital improvement project, not routine maintenance, which is considered a local responsibility, and the municipality must have the financial capability to maintain the harbor in the future. The bill prioritizes repair and major maintenance projects above other projects or new construction. Once a harbor facility receives funding under this program it will not be eligible for additional grants.

In order to access resources and continue to stimulate our economy, Alaskan harbors must be in good working order. This legislation partners the state and municipalities in this endeavor.

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#### DISTRICT A

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