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Senate Approves Roadside Memorials **Bill Permits Alaskans to Safely Honor Loved Ones**

(JUNEAU) – The Alaska State Senate approved House Bill 127 by a vote of 13 to five on Monday. Sponsored by Rep. Jim Whitaker (R-Fairbanks), HB 127 allows for roadside memorials within the right-of-way on state highways.

“These memorials allow the grieving to express their sorrow and remind travelers of the inherent dangers in driving Alaska's roads, particularly when excessive speed or alcohol contributed to the cause of the accident,” Whitaker said. “Many Alaskans instinctively check their speed and take extra care in driving when passing one of these personal memorials.”

HB 127 provides guidelines for posting a roadside memorial. People who post a roadside memorial must provide their contact information on the site and notify the Department of Transportation no more than seven days after they set up the memorial. A variety of objects and materials may be used for a memorial; however, it must not pose a hazard to traffic nor hinder maintenance or construction. If the memorial does not conform to these standards, the person who placed it must either correct it or have it removed.

“The liberty to express our grief, the desire to memorialize a fallen officer, the wish to recognize a tragedy among our community, is a very personal freedom that must not be unnecessarily infringed by government,” Whitaker said. “While the State does not attempt to discourage the placing of such memorials, they will be reasonably regulated so as not to allow unsafe distractions and hazards in Alaska's right of ways..”

HB 127 returns to the House for concurrence.

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