

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

House Bill 16

"An Act relating to the Alaska Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act; and relating to the sale of milk, milk products, raw milk, and raw milk products."

Sponsor Statement

Alaska is especially vulnerable to food shortages and supply interruptions because around 95 percent of food consumed in Alaska originates from outside Alaska. Improving food security is good for our state, good for local businesses, good for our economy, and good for health. These efforts are truly a win for our state. House Bill 16 seeks to increase access to Alaska Grown products by expanding opportunities for direct producer to consumer sales.

House Bill 16 would expand sales of a variety of agricultural products including milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, meats, and other prepared goods. The Food Freedom Bill is modeled on successful efforts to allow more value-added products to be sold directly by producers to consumers in Wyoming, North Dakota, and Maine. Similar Food Freedom Bills are under consideration in California, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, South Dakota, Utah and Virginia.

Alaskans have a right to know what's in their food and how it is prepared. This bill requires labeling to let consumers know what product they are purchasing and how it was prepared, thus providing for informed consumer choice. Direct producer to consumer sales with informed consumer choice, by requiring appropriate, labeling should be legal.

These sales can be regulated for safety while also expanding small business opportunities. Currently, Alaskans spend almost \$2 billion a year on food, but very little is spent on Alaska Grown items. A recent report from the Alaska Farm Bureau estimates that if every Alaskan spent just \$5.00/per week on Alaska Grown items, it would add \$188 million to the Alaska economy.

Interest in locally produced food continues to grow in Alaska. In 2005 there were only 13 farmers markets in Alaska. Now there are nearly 50 farmers markets with direct sales increasing by 32 percent between 2007 and 2012, which is 13 times the national average. Currently nearly one out of every three farms in Alaska sells direct to household consumers, placing Alaska among the top states in direct sales, along with New Hampshire and Vermont.