



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

**Department of Education &
Early Development**

Division of Libraries, Archives & Museums
Alaska State Historical Records Advisory Board

<http://archives.state.ak.us/ashrab/ashrab.html>

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Alaska State Historical Records Advisory Board (ASHRAB) Membership

Dean Dawson, Coordinator
Laura Samuelson, Nome
Dennis Moser, Fairbanks
Bruce Parham, Anchorage
Toby Allen, Anchorage

Judith Bittner/Jo Antonson, Anchorage
Richard Valenti, Fairbanks
Zachary Jones, Juneau
LaRue Barnes, Cordova
Susan Means, Anchorage

March 13, 2014

The Honorable David Ferriero [via fax: 301/837-0483]
Archivist of the United States
The National Archives & Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park MD 20740-6001

RE: CLOSURE OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT ANCHORAGE

Dear Mr. Ferriero:

The ASHRAB, with a mission towards the collection and preservation of Alaska's historical records, writes to you with regard to the announced closure of the NARA – Anchorage facility. We believe that NARA's consolidation is misguided in Alaska's situation because housing Alaska-related records in Washington State compounds Alaskans' research and access challenges to significant materials. The federal government had – and continues to have – an enormous presence in Alaska because of its long tenure as a territory and ownership of over 65% of land in the state today.

Members of the ASHRAB are displeased National Archives managers made no attempt to advise or work with archival and scholarly colleagues in Alaska before announcing the decision to close the facility. A business decision was made and most of us learned about it via a press release. If NARA had included Alaskans in their discussions there could have been better understanding. In short, citizens do not think they were part of the process and are unhappy their government was not interested in their thoughts, concerns, and interests.

Although NARA's press release indicated that *we will be prioritizing the records for possible digitization*, ASHRAB members said such a process could take many years, and as expressed strikes them as an empty promise with the inclusion of the word "possible."

Mr. Ferriero, we urge you to reconsider the decision to close the NARA—Anchorage Branch and urge you to work with Alaska’s congressional delegation to effect measures to assist Alaskans who need and want access to federal records concerning the state.

If the executive and administrative decision to terminate operation of the Alaska Branch is not revocable, the ASHRAB recommends that NARA—Anchorage donate Territorial Court System records to the Alaska State Archives in Juneau so that all Alaska-related court records are in one location in Alaska. If donation is not possible, can the records be transferred to the State Archives under a “NARA Affiliated Archive” arrangement? The State Archives is willing to house and provide access to these records, and other discrete records series with Alaska materials as well, in its new facility to ensure their protection and access.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. We ask that we be kept advised of any further actions regarding the NARA—Anchorage facility and its records, particularly digitization plans of Alaska materials.

Sincerely,



Dean Dawson
ASHRAB Coordinator & State Archivist

With full concurrence and support of all ASHRAB members:

Judy Bittner/Joan Antonson, Anchorage
Toby Allen, Anchorage
Zachary Jones, Juneau
LaRue Barnes, Cordova
Dennis Moser, Fairbanks
Bruce Parham, Anchorage
Laura Samuelson, Nome
Rich Valenti, Fairbanks

The following member recused herself due to conflict:

Susan Means, Anchorage

c: Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Mark Begich
Representative Don Young
Jay Bosanko, NARA COO