

# Alaska State Legislature



January 24, 2020

Mr. Russ Vought, Acting Director  
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

*Delivered via Facsimile*

RE: Concern For proposed closure of the Seattle National Archives and Records Administration Center

Dear Mr. Vought:

We are writing to convey our concern over the Public Buildings Reform Board (PBRB) proposal to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) recommending closure of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Center in Seattle, Washington. Archival materials from Alaska are housed at this location after being moved upon closure of the Anchorage, Alaska National Archives in 2014. If this proposal is approved, materials from Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington would be moved to Riverside, California and Kansas City, Missouri.

Moving these valuable, one-of-a-kind historical treasures further away from the Pacific Northwest would be a massive loss to Alaska. Not only will it make travel to the new location increasingly cost prohibitive for Alaskan people, students, researchers, attorneys, and government agencies, the prioritization of digitization of Alaska's records will likely be delayed. NARA committed to digitizing records when the collection was moved from the Anchorage facility in 2014, but a very small portion of these records have been digitized to date.

Alaskans connect with our shared history through the materials at the National Archives and Records Center in a wide variety of important ways. This is where Alaska District Court records are accessed, which can serve as critical roles in ongoing court proceedings, including probate. Members of the general public do valuable genealogy research. Alaska historians access primary sources for their research and publication purposes.

Federal archives hold greater importance to Alaska than other Lower 48 states, as the Federal Government played a key role in Alaska before statehood in 1959 and is still the largest landholder in the state. Additionally, in a larger facility with materials from other states, there will be less expertise in the Alaska collections to help guide Alaskans find the materials they need.

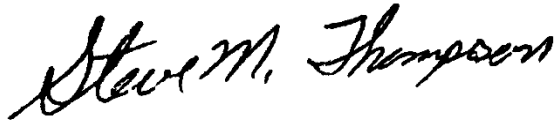
While we recognize and are no stranger to cost constraints, access to these historical records is vitally important to Alaskans. We are concerned that this proposal has not included a process for adequate public input, and that Alaskans have not been informed of this issue.

We urge you to recommend keeping the archives open and fully operational in Seattle for the service of all Alaskans; at a minimum, we urge you to consider delaying this decision until public opinion can be solicited from Alaskans.

Respectfully,



Rep. Bart LeBon  
House District 1 – Fairbanks



Rep. Steve Thompson  
House District 2 – Fairbanks



Rep. Tammie Wilson  
House District 3 – North Pole



Rep. Grier Hopkins  
House District 4 – Fairbanks



Rep. Adam Wool  
House District 5 – Fairbanks



Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
District A – Fairbanks



Sen. John Coghill  
District B – North Pole



Sen. Click Bishop  
District C – Fairbanks

CC: The Honorable Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski  
The Honorable Alaska Senator Dan Sullivan  
The Honorable Alaska Representative Don Young