

# Senator Peter A. Micciche

*Alaska State Legislature*

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## **Senate Bill 100**

### **“An Act naming the Willard E. Dunham Residence Hall.”**

#### **SPONSOR STATEMENT**

Senate Bill 100 names the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) dormitory located at 516 Third Avenue in Seward, Alaska as the “Willard E. Dunham Residential Hall”.

The naming of the dormitory honors Willard Eugene Dunham who recently passed away on March 1, 2019. After Willard’s years of service to the state of Alaska and specifically his advocacy for the AVTEC Facility in Seward, it is appropriate that the vocational training residence hall be named for this icon of pioneering Alaskans who has forever left his mark on this great state.

This bill honors the work and memory of the much beloved and respected community member of Seward, who was a champion of the community and was instrumental in working to diversify the economy of the town after the 1964 earthquake destroyed much of Seward.

Willard Dunham worked for the Alaska Department of Labor when AVTEC was founded in 1969. His passionate advocacy of Seward convinced the committee founding AVTEC to be established on the Kenai Peninsula. As a direct result, the decision was made to establish the state-supported vocational training center, the Alaska Skills Center, in Seward where he served as the founding director from 1969 to 2019.

Aside from his work with AVTEC, Dunham served time in the US Army as a medic stationed at the Eielson Air Force Base, worked with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and served the City of Seward to help to create an impressive record of community service and employment projects. Some of these projects included the Spring Creek Correctional Center and the Seward Library and Museum. He was a founding member of the Alaska SeaLife Center’s Board of Directors, was elected to serve six years on the Seward City Council, and spent two years as Seward’s mayor. Willard also spent time as the president of the Seward General Hospital board, served as the Chamber of Commerce President twice, served on Fish & Game Advisory groups and longshore union boards, and sat on nearly every city task force, commission, and committee over a 60-year period.

Renaming the Third Avenue AVTEC dormitory the Willard E. Dunham Residence Hall will stand as a reminder of the inspirational dedication and the vision Willard demonstrated for Seward, and an acknowledgement of Dunham’s achievements, honorable works, and service to Alaska for over half of a century.