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## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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### **49-star flags donated to public buildings**

JUNEAU -- Forty-nine-star U.S. flags dating from the first days of Alaska statehood are being distributed to state buildings and public libraries, thanks to the efforts of Rep. John Coghill and his staff.

Twenty-nine of the flags were discovered for sale this spring as souvenirs in the Alaska General Store in downtown Juneau. They arrived in Juneau by a circuitous route.

J.C. Penney sold the new 49-star U.S. flags to celebrate Alaska statehood in 1959, even in Santa Ana, Calif., said resident Andrew Beyer, who is now 90 years old and still works professionally as a children's clown. In 1959, Beyer was head of a church-affiliated Boy Scout troop in Santa Ana. J.C. Penney donated its unsold 49-star flags to the church for fund-raising, but there wasn't a big demand for the flags, Beyer said.

When Beyer and his wife, Margaret, visited Juneau by cruise ship six years ago, he brought some of the 49-star flags and sold them to the Alaska General Store. Recently Coghill's office located Beyer in California and purchased an additional 36 49-star flags, some 12x18 inches and some 24x36 inches.

Coghill, R-North Pole, is having a total of sixty-four 49-star flags framed with dark-blue mats and gold-mat silhouettes of Alaska for display at state office buildings and public libraries throughout the state. The cost of buying the flags and framing them has been covered by an account of the House Rules Committee, of which Coghill is the chairman.

"What a wonderful opportunity to highlight not only the history of Alaska but the libraries, too," Rep. Coghill said. "That's what we're trying to do - get everyone involved in the 50th-celebration of statehood."

Five of the mats are signed in gold ink by the four surviving members of the Alaska Constitutional Convention: Jack Coghill of Nenana (Rep. Coghill's father); Vic Fischer of Anchorage; Seaborn Buckalew of Anchorage; and George Sundborg, formerly of Juneau and now living in Seattle. Coghill is donating these framed flags to the Governor's Office,

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the Alaska Legislature, the Alaska Supreme Court, Signers' Hall in Fairbanks, and the Alaska State Museum in Juneau.

“We appreciate the generosity of Rep Coghill in donating these flags for display in libraries,” said Kay Shelton, director of the Alaska Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums. “Libraries are educational centers for their community, a perfect choice for citizens to visit and learn more about statehood and its significance to Alaskans.”

As for Mr. and Mrs. Beyer, they have visited Alaska by cruise three times, are recognized in the Alaska General Store, always recommend the vacation to their friends, and are happy they could help Alaska celebrate the anniversary of statehood.

“I feel honored that I’m helping out to celebrate your 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary,” Andrew Beyer said.

For more information: Rynnieva Moss, Rep. John Coghill’s office, at 907-488-5725 or EED Information Officer Eric Fry at 907-465-2851.

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