

Statement From The House of Cranford

An Open Letter to the Citizens of Sitka Regarding Pending Legal Action

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

You may have seen in the news that our family has filed a lawsuit against the City and Borough of Sitka. For generations, the Cranford family has been guided by the principles of Honour and Duty, *Esse quam videri* ("Few are those who wish to be endowed with virtue rather than to seem so"), and *Non nobis solum* ("Not for us alone are we born; our country, our friends, have a share in us"). These principles have motivated us in our long tradition of service to our communities across the country as police officers, firefighters, EMS workers, teachers, public servants, and in military service to our nation.

We are writing this letter to explain why we have taken this difficult step. This is not for personal gain, but to defend a right we believe is essential for a healthy and transparent democracy: the right to free speech. We believe the city's actions including what appears to be deliberately misleading information and its refusal to fix a known problem are an unacceptable breach of public trust and a potential violation of constitutional rights.

For months, we tried to engage with city officials, including the assembly, through emails, seeking a productive dialogue. Our sincere efforts for transparency were met with a lack of openness. Statements made by Municipal Administrator John M. Leach were profoundly disappointing, especially given his service in the Coast Guard, an organization dedicated to upholding the Constitution. We have since gathered proof that the city is selectively silencing some voices while permitting others, which violates the First Amendment's prohibition against viewpoint discrimination a practice that is not only unconstitutional but that we find fundamentally unfair and un-American..

We have been forced to take legal action as a necessary step in our unwavering commitment to transparency and accountability from our cities leadership. It is our hope that this lawsuit will serve to defend a fundamental right, restore public trust, and hold those responsible accountable.

Sincerely, the Cranford Family

Signed and Sealed by Austin Wayne Cranford on August 6, 2025, Transmitted to Family Office under PR/LO-2025-AK-01-01 on August 6,2025 for archival.

Austin W Cranford

