

Alaska Women's Lobby
Week Eleven Legislative Report

March 19th - March 24th 2001

1st Regular Session of the Twenty-Second Alaska Legislature

report prepared by Caren Robinson

Action Needed:

HB 160 Requires Reporting of Induced Abortion

The first hearing is scheduled on Thursday March 29th at 3:00 p.m.

HB 160, sponsored by Representative Coghill & Representative Dyson requiring the reporting of induced terminations of pregnancies. It requires a hospital, clinic, other institution where and induced termination of pregnancy is performed in the state to submit a report directly to the state registrar within three days after the induced termination is completed.

Other information required a). medical complication, if any, that resulted from the termination; b). whether a fetal anomaly was discernible and, if so, the type: c). the reason given by the pregnant woman for the termination.

HES Committee Members:

Dyson, Coghill, Wilson, Kohring are anti-choice. Don't know about Stevens. (Does anyone know?) Joule and Cissna are pro-choice:

[Representative Fred Dyson@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Fred_Dyson@legis.state.ak.us), Chair: phone (907) 465-2199

[Representative John Coghill@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_John_Coghill@legis.state.ak.us): phone (907) 465-3719

[Representative Peggy Wilson@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Peggy_Wilson@legis.state.ak.us): phone (907) 465-3824

[Representative Gary Stevens@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Gary_Stevens@legis.state.ak.us): phone (907) 465-4925

[Representative Vic Kohring@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us): phone (907) 465-2186

[Representative Sharon Cissna@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Sharon_Cissna@legis.state.ak.us): phone (907) 465-3875

[Representative Reggie Joule@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Reggie_Joule@legis.state.ak.us): phone (907) 465-4833

SB 65 Passes Senate-States Women Should Get Equal Pay

The Alaska Senate passed legislation this week authorizing an investigation to determine if female employees of the State of Alaska receive unfairly low wages compared to their male counterparts.

SB 65, sponsored by Senator Donley and Senator Taylor, addresses this inequity, providing a mechanism to bring the state into compliance with federal law, and putting an end to wage-based sex discrimination in state employment. The bill requires the Department of Administration to identify instances in which the state is illegally paying women less than men. When these

disparities in pay are identified, the state will be able to develop phased strategies to eliminate sex discrimination.

Donley has previously introduced legislation on this subject. SB 65 passed the Senate 17-1 and now moves to the House for consideration.

Rally for Women's Health:

Governor Knowles, Lieutenant Governor Fran Ulmer, Senate Democratic Leader Johnny Ellis, other Democratic legislators, and concerned Alaskans gathered on the Capitol steps at noon to rally for women's health.

SB 38, which would allow Alaska to opt into a Medicaid program to gain federal dollars for treating uninsured women diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer (under the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program), was a key rallying point. The bill wouldn't help everyone, but it's a good first step to treat approximately 40 women per year who we know will not receive treatment otherwise.

Also discussed was SB 15 , sponsored by Senator Ellis. That bill would provide prescription parity for women by mandating coverage for contraceptives.

New Report Documents Health of Alaskans

Alaskans are generally healthier today than a decade ago, yet there is room for substantial improvement in several areas, says a new report by the state Department of Health and Social Services. Health Status in Alaska, 2000 Edition ,reports that work-related deaths in Alaska dropped 55 percent between 1990-99, deaths from accidental injuries such as car crashes and drownings dropped 34 percent and teen birth rates dropped 25 percent.

But the report also notes that over-weight adults increased 52 percent and that more than half of Alaskans have a sedentary lifestyle. It also says Alaska's rate of suicide and deaths from firearms are both more than double the U.S. average and notes that tuberculosis remains an important health issue in Alaska requiring continued vigilance. The report includes updated information on 19 major health issues and is available at Web site:

www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/deu/publications/publications.html.

Hate Crimes Legislation Introduced

Led by Senator Lincoln , Senate Democrats introduced legislation targeting criminals who select victims based on their race, sex, color, creed, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, ancestry, or national origin.

House Passes HJR 22 Hate Crimes Resolution

The Alaska House of Representatives spoke with one voice today to denounce racism, unanimously passing a resolution condemning a recent paint ball attack on Alaska Natives, encouraging federal investigation of racism in Alaska and calling for sensitivity training for those convicted of racially motivated crimes.

House Joint Resolution 22, sponsored by the entire membership of the House, came in reaction to a well-publicized videotape showing three young Eagle River men in a car using a paint ball

gun to shoot inebriated Alaska Natives on downtown Anchorage streets in January.

Many legislators said they had viewed the videotape, and expressed their revulsion at its implications for race relations in Alaska, and at the unfavorable impression of Alaska it conveys to the rest of the nation.

HB 100: Remembers the End of Slavery

The Legislature took the final step in creating an official "Juneteenth Day" holiday to commemorate the end of slavery and celebrate the freedom of all Alaskans, when the Senate today passed Representative McGuire's HB 100.

SB 105: Senate Passes Bill Protects Crime Victims' Rights

The state Senate passed SB 105 Tuesday. Sponsored by Senator Halford the measure creates the Office of Victims' Rights to provide experienced professionals to act on behalf of crime victims in Alaska's legal system. The office would be charged with keeping victims informed of their rights and helping guide them through the legal process. Staff also could testify on a victim's behalf in court.

The bill also would prevent a defense attorney from referring to a victim's decision not to testify at a sentencing hearing. If a victim complained of being denied their right, the office would investigate the complaints and might recommend changes in the system.

The bill also increases the amount of money crime victims can receive from the Violent Crimes Compensation Board. To fund the program a change in Permanent Fund dividend forfeitures program expanded the list of prisoners from whom dividends can be seized.

The bill is similar to one the Governor vetoed last year, saying it created a bureaucracy instead of putting money into direct aid for crime victims.

The bill passed the Senate unanimously. It now goes to the House.

Budget:

The Senate continues behind the scene to develop its 2002 budget plan. Rumor has it that Senate caps or allocations will be announced early next week. Some believe they will be much lower than the original House allocations numbers.

Representative Hudson introduced a state income tax bill HB 199 that he says would raise \$250 million to help plug Alaska's long-term fiscal gap.

Under the measure, those making money in Alaska would pay the state 15 percent of their federal income tax liability. That means a person paying \$5,000 in federal taxes would also owe the state \$750. State income taxes are deductible for federal tax purposes.

The bill is not expected to pass this year but it is expected to spark debate again.

The state now fills the gap between spending and revenues by drawing money from the constitutional Budget Reserve, a state savings account. This year, the gap is expected to be about \$500 million. At that rate, the reserve is expected to be drained by about fiscal year 2005.

Representative Hudson also introduced a bill that would use part of the Permanent Fund's earnings to replenish the Constitutional Budget Reserve once the reserve drops below \$1.5

billion.

Panel to Consider 90-Day Sessions and Biennial Budgeting Measures

Representative Fate was named today to head a subcommittee of the House State Affairs Committee tasked with considering several bills proposing significant changes in how long the Alaska Legislature meets and how it writes state budgets.

SJR 12: Legislature Supports Equity for Married Couples

The House called for the elimination of the marriage tax penalty when it unanimously passed a Senate resolution 12.

HB 177: Campaign Finance: Contribution/Disclosure/Groups

The House State Affairs Committee this week passed out HB 177. Sponsored by the House Rules Committee, HB 177 would extend state political contribution limits and disclosure requirements to "non-group entities" which, under a 1999 Alaska Supreme Court ruling, may make independent political expenditures as long as they are not in business, have no shareholders and are independent of any business influence. HB 177 moves next to the House Finance Committee.

SB 155/ HB 204: Governor Expands Alaska Student Loan Program

Governor Knowles this week introduced legislation to create the AlaskAdvantage program that uses federally guaranteed student loans to provide borrowers with lower interest rates with less risk to the state.

The AlaskAdvantage program builds on the success of Alaska's student loan program over the past few years. After years of posting losses, the Commission on Post secondary Education and the Alaska Student Loan Corporation have turned the program around -- running it in the black for the first time in history and paying a dividend back to the state. This year the dividend payment is \$2.2 million with another \$4 million expected for fiscal year 2002. All of this while serving over 90,000 Alaska student loan customers with \$615 million in loans.

Knowles' bill SB 155/HB 204 also creates a supplemental loan program to provide financial assistance in the event the AlaskAdvantage Loan is insufficient to cover education costs or the student does not qualify for assistance under the federal guaranteed student loan program.

SB 155/HB 204 will create a one-stop financial aid information center and financial opportunity, guaranty the lowest possible borrowing rates, streamline aid delivery, and reduce financial risk to the state through the federal guarantee. This program will also offer expanded options for borrowers with special needs in loan repayment.

SJR 6 Legislature Wants State to Control Education Funds

The Alaska House unanimously passed a resolution this week urging Congress to give states greater control over the federal education dollars they receive.

Advocates Gather to Highlight Impacts of Alcoholism and Mental Illness

This weeks the halls were filled with members of the Meeting the Challenge Campaign (individuals in sobriety), the Bridges Campaign (families and individuals with mental illness and mental retardation), and Mental Health Board lobbying and advocating on their needs.

Bill Extends Program for Mentally Ill

Senator Kelly introduced legislation this week to extend a program that provides treatment for mentally ill Alaskans.

The Designates Evaluation and Treatment Program was created in the Spring of 1999 to provide treatment through local hospitals for people who are in mental crisis and have nowhere else to go. These individuals are working poor people who have no insurance or Medicaid coverage, who cannot afford hospitalization and who meet certain eligibility requirements.

The Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities has designated eight local community hospitals as evaluation facilities providing 72-hour psychiatric evaluations, and two as treatment facilities providing up to 30 days of treatment. The division pays for care provided by the hospitals on a payer of last resort basis. Up to 250 receive hospital services reimbursed through this program each year.

This assistance has been available since 1978, but the eligibility criteria were vague and open to individual interpretation. SB 97 sponsored by Senator Kelly was introduced two years ago, to clarify the criteria and create the program as it exists today. But the bill includes a sunset clause that will end the program on July 1, 2001 and return it to the state it was in before.

SB 154, also sponsored by Kelly, would remove the sunset clause and extend the program indefinitely. Without this change, individuals in need of treatment would have to be transported to Alaska Psychiatric Institute or held in correctional facilities.

HB 80: Legal Hours for Sale of Alcohol

The House Labor and Commerce this week passed HB 80. Sponsored by Representative Ogan, HB 80 would create a statewide standard requiring all bars to close from 2 a.m. to 10 a.m. on weekdays, and from 3:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. The bill moves next to the House Finance Committee.

HB 132: Liquor License Applicant Check/Training

The House Labor and Commerce this week passed HB 132. Sponsored by the House Judiciary Committee by request, HB 132 attempts to address the problem of bootlegging by lowering the amount of alcohol a person may possess before law enforcement authorities may presume it is for illegal resale. The bill also authorizes the state Alcohol Beverage Control Board to submit fingerprints of prospective liquor licensees to the Federal Bureau of Investigation to run through its national criminal history record system.

The bill moves next to the House Judiciary Committee.

HB 162: Absences Under Longevity Bonus Program

The House State Affairs Committee this week passed out HB 162. Sponsored by the House Health, Education and Social Services Committee, HB 162 would increase from 30 to 60 consecutive days the amount of time that senior citizens may be absent from the state and still collect the Longevity Bonus. It also eliminates confusing 90-day exemptions and permanently disqualifies anyone from reapplying if they are gone from the state for more than five years. HB 162 moves next to the House Finance Committee.

HB 197: Enact The Five Wishes in Alaska

HB 197 introduced by Representative Hudson is "An Act relating to directives for personal health care services and for medical treatment." This bill is an effort to enact The Five Wishes in Alaska. Presently, 35 states have The Five Wishes as their Advance Directives legislation.

HB 110 Social Security Number Bill Passes House

The House of Representatives passed a bill that would keep Social Security numbers off Alaska drivers licenses.

HB 110, sponsored by Representative Coghill, would still allow the state to retain records of drivers' Social Security numbers, but would keep the numbers off both operators and commercial drivers licenses.

The measure now advances to the Senate for consideration.

Legislature Names Near Island Bridge for Zharoff

The Alaska House unanimously passed legislation on Friday that would name a bridge on Kodiak Island after Senator Fred Zharoff.

On February 6, 2001 Senator Fred Zharoff lost his battle with cancer. He was 57.

Committee Schedule

(S)HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE *

Mar 26 Monday 12:00 PM SENATE FINANCE 532

Budget Closeout

(H)JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE *

Mar 26 Monday 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120

=+HB 4 OMNIBUS DRUNK DRIVING AMENDMENTS TELECONFERENCED

Bills Previously Heard/Scheduled

(H)FINANCE STANDING COMMITTEE *

Mar 26 Monday 1:30 PM HOUSE FINANCE 519

=+HB 116 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS/AMEND APPROP. TELECONFERENCED

Bills Previously Heard/Scheduled

(S)JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE *

Mar 26 Monday 2:00 PM BELTZ 211

-- Time Change --

*+SB 145 VILLAGE PUB.SAFETY OFFICER PROGRAM TELECONFERENCED
