

From The Desk  
Of Representative Paul Seaton

Weekly Legislative Newsletter

March 17, 2003

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House Action

Last week, we passed HB 51 from the House, a bill I introduced requiring the generic name of a drug to be listed on brand-name prescriptions. The bill passed 34-0 in the House and will be heard in the Senate HESS committee as early as next week. If you would like to read the bill and the sponsor statement, just hit the link for my webpage. Other bills and resolutions that passed the House last week were:

HB 23 Restitution for Crime Victims

HB 124 Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers/Employer

HB 12 Harassment by Electronic Communication

HCR 2 Extend Alaska Railroad to FT. Greely

HB 118-The other bill that I introduced, known as the Transporter bill, passed from House Resources last week and will be waived from the House Finance Committee shortly. I expect to have the bill on the House Floor early next week.

Focusing on the Governor's Budget

There are many people calling the office and writing to us regarding the Governor's proposed budget. The issues that seem to be most prevalent on people's minds are: \$47 million cut to the longevity bonus, \$1.2 million cut to Fish & Game, \$2 million cut to Alyeska Central Correspondence school, \$27 million overall cut to education funding, and the \$619,000 cuts to the Independent Learning Center. I am working on restoring funding wherever we can. The budget process really hasn't begun yet in Juneau and we should have a clearer picture of the budget later on.

Supplemental Budget Passed House & Senate, Signed by Governor

Governor Murkowski signed House Bill 100 into law Monday, March 17, 2003. HB 100 is the supplemental budget for the 2003 fiscal year. More than \$71 million in general funds will support disaster relief, education efforts to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil and gas exploration, and programs that require more funding to complete FY 03, which ends June 30th.

Here are some of the big-ticket items.

\*\*\$19 million will finance fire suppression costs

\*\*\$10.7 million will pay for disaster relief for events such as last year's earthquake

\*\*\$1.3 million will fund efforts to open ANWR to oil and gas exploration

\*\*\$500,000 for the accident involving a corrections transport van on the Seward Highway

\*\*\$100,000 for the Red Dog Mine air quality dispute

Click below to see the Governor's Supplemental and State FY04 budget:

<http://www.gov.state.ak.us/omb/akomb.htm>

Kodiak Representative Seat Filled-finally!

Governor Frank H. Murkowski today announced the appointment of Dan Ogg to fill the vacant House District 36 seat. Ogg is executive director of Alaskan Oceans Seas and Fisheries Research Foundation in Kodiak and a former member of the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska.

Ogg, 53, has lived in Kodiak since 1975. He is an adjunct professor at the Kodiak campus of the University of Alaska Anchorage. He is also a member of the Alaska Bar Association, a commercial fisherman and serves on the local Draft Board from 1982-2002. I look forward to working with Dan in the Kenai/Kodiak Caucus.

## EDUCATION

This past week in the House Education Committee we heard four education bills introduced by the Governor as part of his broad objective of decreasing state costs. HB 154 disallows registering 4 year olds in kindergarten unless they are exceptional individuals that will progress to the next grade level. This bill, the Governor stated is intended to save the state money by cutting funding to districts that abuse this option by using it to gain additional foundation formula funds. This bill was passed out of the Education Committee. HB 165, which cuts state funding for the Community Schools program, passed-out of Committee. HB 171 cuts state funding to the Charter School Grant Program. It was also passed out of Committee with the understanding that the Dept. of Education would secure increases in federal funds. HB 174, which would cut all funding for Alyeska Central Correspondence School (ACCS), did not pass out of the committee.

Cuts to ACCS provoked the most public opposition. The Governor suggested that comparable programs were available through other schools. Testimony revealed that savings made by ACCS elimination would only be reflected in increases in other budgets. It has also been noted that the ACCS program would be helpful in the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act. The possibility of just cutting the summer ACCS program has been presented as an option to the Committee. Further deliberation on this bill will take place on Tuesday, the 18<sup>th</sup>.

## Health, Education, and Social Services Committee

We heard HB 135, which deals with updating existing statutes for Marital and Family Therapists. This bill brings Alaska in line with other state's policies. We also heard HJR 13, which urges Washington D.C. to adopt Alaska's plan for implementation of the federal "No Child Left Behind Act." HB 146 allows the Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) to continue collecting social security numbers from anyone applying for a commercial fishing permit, so CSED can track and enforce child support orders. HB 166, introduced by the Governor would save money by eliminating annual reviews of "hard to place" children after they have been adopted. All the bills we heard last week passed out of HESS and should be on the floor for a

vote soon. HESS has quite a few bills and I anticipate the bills will keep us busy.

### Fisheries Committee

Last week, the Fisheries Committee met only once to Hear HB 105, an act relating to loans for past due tax obligations. The bill authorizes the Commercial Fishing Revolving Loan Fund to loan fisherman money for past taxes. It also removes the ½ % refinance fee on all other loans. A few people from Homer testified in support of the bill and the bill was moved from committee.

### Special Comm. Hearing on the Habitat Division Move

FYI:Last Minute Time Change- the Fisheries Committee will be holding a special evening hearing on EO 107 (Habitat Div. Transfer) on Wednesday, March 26<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-10:00 pm. Go to your local LIO to testify or send written comments in my office. We will be having a panel discussion from many individuals with an interest in fisheries and fisheries habitat. Last week, I sat through testimony in the Senate Resources Committee and in the House State Affairs Committee. The panel discussion in the Fisheries Committee should yield more directed information on how EO 107 will work to protect habitat and our fisheries.

\*HB 191-Coastal Zone Management This morning we had a special committee hearing for the Governor's HB 191-the Coastal Zone Management Bill. The committee spent two solid hours listening to expert witnesses and testimony regarding changes in the bill. Currently, we are going to hold the bill in committee until we have gathered enough information to make an informed decision.

### Private Prison Issue & Prison Expansion

There are several bills in the Senate and the House relating to prison. HB 4, HB 55, HB 134, SB 65 and SB 99 all deal with expansion of prisons or allowing for private prisons. We are hearing the house versions in the next couple of weeks in the State Affairs Committee.

### Legislative Weekend-Break for Energy Council

This week the legislature will be taking a few days off for members to attend Energy Council meetings in Washington D.C.

I will be coming home for the weekend. If you like call the LIO for scheduling. I will be in the district on the following days:

\*\*\*Friday\*\*\* -Homer Town meeting at 7pm at Homer High School

\*\*\*Saturday\*\*\*-Seldovia meet a 3pm with City Council in multipurpose room and at 5pm-I will be at the dock for a ceremony celebrating Seldovia as a scenic byway.

\*\*\*Monday\*\*\*-Seward tentatively planned to meet with educators and others.

### Bill Access System

Remember, all bills can be found on the State's BASIS system. You will find the system to be accessible at the website below.

<http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/start.asp>

### Live on the Web

Remember that you can hear just about any committee hearing or tune into just about any legislative session-present or past-by going to Gavel to Gavel, TV and public radio broadcasts of the state legislature as it occurs.

Click on the link below to connect to Gavel to Gavel.

<http://www.ktoo.org/gavel/schedule.cfm>

If you need to contact the staff please click below:

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