



Senate Majority News

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Senate's First Weekend Session of the Year **Passes Two Bills On: Predator Control and Lobbying Issues**

(Juneau) – In a sign that the first session of the Twenty-Third Alaska Legislature is drawing to a close, the Senate met for its first weekend floor session this Saturday and passed two important bills over to the House of Representatives.

Senate Bills 89 and 155 both sponsored by Sen. Ralph Seekins (R-Fairbanks) passed the Senate Saturday with bipartisan support. SB 89 refines lobbying laws to allow more access to legislators by members of the public that want to be active in the governing process, without being labeled as a professional lobbyist.

“Right now, the statutory definition of lobbyist is ‘anyone who spends substantial and regular time attempting to influence the Legislature and/or administration’ – an administrative regulation adopted four hours in a 30 day period as the threshold for requiring registration as a lobbyist,” said Seekins. “This means civic minded individuals, small business owners, and community activist groups such as the Key Campaign, could technically be violating the law when they come to Juneau. This bill brings Alaska more into line with lobbying laws of other states.”

Seekins said that the only way to change this regulation is by passing a statute that sets the standard, and that is exactly what the Senate did Saturday with passage of SB 89. Once the bill is signed into law, the new statute will define that only those who professionally lobby the Legislature and spend more than 40 hours in a 30-day period would be required to register.

SB 155, which also passed the Senate Saturday, gives the Alaska Game Board and the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game more options in trying to deal with the issue of predator control, which Seekins said is becoming a more pervasive problem every year.

“The thinning of Moose and Caribou heard by predators is not just upsetting the ecological balance among our wildlife, but is also preventing Alaskans that live off the land from being able to feed their families, because the predators are getting to the herds before the hunters,” said Seekins

According to Seekins SB 155 gives the Game Board and the commissioner the tools to better manage wildlife by balancing predator and game populations based on the best available science.

Both bills will be brought up again on Sunday for reconsideration before moving to the House of Representatives.

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