

The Alaska Women's Lobby

Week Nine Legislative Report

March 5th - March 11th 2001

1st Regular Session of the Twenty-Second Alaska Legislature

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Anti Abortion Bills in the House and Senate

Informed Consent Bill has First Hearing

HB 112, sponsored by Representative John Coghill had its first hearing in the House Health Education and Social Services Committee. The bill prohibits Alaskan doctors from performing an abortion unless they have fully informed mothers of the risks and advised them of the age of the fetus.

The bill would require the state to prepare a pamphlet that would describe abortion procedures and include photographs of unborn babies at two-week intervals.

Women would have to certify, in writing, that the information was provided, except in medical emergencies - if the abortion was necessary to prevent death or serious risk to the mother.

HB 112 would make doctors civilly liable for violating the provisions.

The bill drew more opponents than supporters. Nine people testified AGAINST the bill, three people testified IN FAVOR. The committee postponed action until Wednesday March 14th.

Note: The Senate version of this "Informed Consent" measure, SB 91, will be considered by the Senate Health Education and Social Services on Wednesday, March 14 at 1:30 PM. The meeting will be teleconferenced.

HB 160 Requiring Reporting of Induced Abortions - Introduced Friday

A second, even more intrusive, anti-choice, measure was introduced by Representatives Coghill and Dyson this week.

HB 160 would require the reporting of induced terminations of pregnancies by all Alaskan facilities where an induced termination of pregnancy is performed. The facility would report directly to the state registrar within three days after the induced termination is completed.

The legislation requires a woman's right to privacy be invaded by asking her, for instance, if she is terminating her pregnancy for social or economic reasons.

For the full text of this legislation:

<http://www.legis.state.ak.us/PDF/22/Bills/HB0160A.PDF>

Friend to Alaskan Women Dies

Former House Speaker Hugh Malone was killed in an accident on vacation in Italy. Malone, a Democrat who was speaker in 1977-78 during 12 years representing the Kenai Peninsula, was one of the prime movers behind the creation of the Alaska Permanent Fund and the creation of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

State Operating Budget Takes Shape

House Finance subcommittees have completed their agency budgets.

In long hearings Thursday and Friday, the house finance committee took comments from about 200 Alaskans. Several recovering alcoholics asked the committee not to cut the governor's proposals for increased spending on treatment programs. Social workers argued that cutting treatment programs will not reduce costs simply shift them to because the correctional system, welfare and mental health services.

Amendments will be presented by the full House Budget Committee this weekend. Many areas of concern are expected to be addressed before the final budget goes to the floor of the house for a vote on Tuesday.

The Senate continues to develop their budget plan in sub-committees.

Senate Finance to Consider Pay Equity and Victim's Rights

SB 65 – Pay Equity for State Employees will be heard in Senate Finance on Tuesday, March 13 at 9:15 AM.

SB 105 – Victim's Rights/Prisoner's PFD will be heard in Senate Finance on Wednesday, March 14 at 9:00 AM.

Legislature Takes Note

SCR 6 - Sexual Assault Awareness Month

The Senate State Affairs Committee passed this resolution on Thursday. Sponsored by Senator Loren Leman, the measure would declare April 2001 as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. SCR 6 moves to the Senate Rules Committee. The House HES Committee will consider a companion measure, HCR 7 on Tuesday, March 13.

HB 100 - Juneteenth Day – Abolition of Slavery

The Senate State Affairs Committee passed HB 100 on Thursday. Sponsored by Representative Leslie McGuire, HB 100 would establish an unpaid holiday to mark the abolition of slavery in the United States, highlighting the achievements of African-Americans in the state. HB 100 moves next to the Senate Rules Committee.

HCR 4 - Honoring African-Americans

The House of Representatives this week unanimously passed a resolution sponsored by Representative Dyson, calling on Alaskans to honor the contributions of African-American citizens by celebrating February 2002 as "African-American Citizen Recognition Month."

Alaska is home to nearly 28,000 citizens of African-American descent. HCR 4 moves to the Senate for consideration.

Education Bills

HB 43 - Student Loan Forgiveness

Seeking to ease a state teacher shortage, Representative Joe Green sponsored legislation requiring the state to reimburse Alaska public school teachers up to 50

percent of the cost of their state student loans for their junior and senior years of college.

The reimbursement would be limited to teachers, librarians, counselors and others with valid teacher certificates working in districts or teaching in specialties where the State Board of Education had identified a shortage of qualified teachers.

HB 43 passed from the House Health, Education and Social Services Committee on Thursday. It moves next to the House Finance Committee.

High School Graduation Competency Exam Compliance Delayed

Senator Green has introduced draft legislation to push back the effective date of the test to 2004. To give schools flexibility to accommodate kids with learning disabilities the measure would also allow special-needs students to take an alternative test.

The proposal would require students to take the competency test the next two years, but they would not be required to pass the exam to graduate.

Instead, schools would indicate on diplomas and transcripts the portions the student passed. Beginning in 2004, the exam would become an essential skills test.

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"Defending and advancing the rights and needs of Women, Children and Families in Alaska"