



April 2006



News from Juneau

Senator Gene Therriault, R - North Pole

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SB 210 To Be Signed by Governor

Senate District Area (F)

Our Senate District encompasses an area from North Pole south along the west side of the Richardson Highway down to Valdez and the Glenn Highway west to the outskirts of Palmer. Representative John Harris from Valdez and Representative John Coghill from North Pole serve the two corresponding House Districts within Senate District F.

My Staff Assistants: Joe Balash, Tom Maher, Heather Brakes, Dave Stancliff, and Jeanne Ostnes

Phone numbers: Toll free, 1-800-860-4797, or standard line, 907-465-4797

E-mail: Sen_Gene_Therriault@legis.state.ak.us

Specific Committee Assignments: Chairman, Legislative Budget and Audit; Chairman, Senate State Affairs; Vice Chairman, Administrative Regulation and Review; Vice Chairman, Legislative Council; Member Senate Judiciary; Member Senate Transportation; Member Joint Armed Services

Web Address: www.akRepublicans.org/therriault/index.php

I introduced Senate Bill 210 this year to strengthen Alaska's bootlegging laws by giving law enforcement and communities better tools to combat importation of alcohol into dry communities. Recognizing that many Alaska rural residents and communities "... face the highest alcohol abuse and family violence rates in the country," Congress established the Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission in 2004 and charged it with making recommendations to the Alaska Legislature and Congress. The Commission presented its initial report to the Legislature this month and made several recommendations related to illegal alcohol importation. Senate Bill 210 implements some of those recommendations to help law enforcement and communities fight the illegal importation of alcohol.

SB 210 passed the Legislature on April 10, 2006 and is scheduled to be signed by the Governor next week.

"Stand Your Ground" Legislation Moving

"The right to defend yourself and your family is basic and must be protected."
- Sen. Therriault

The legislation I introduced to strengthen and protect victims of crime continues to receive broad support in the Legislature. SB 200 passed the Senate on a 17-2 vote and has now been heard and moved from the House Judiciary to House Finance. When people who are threatened stand their ground they need to know they will not be sued or prosecuted for doing so. The right to defend our homes, families, and others in danger is extremely important. SB 200 recognizes the need to protect those who choose to do so.

After House Finance, SB 200 will move to the House Floor for a vote. I want to thank Representative John Coghill, who has provided enthusiastic assistance as Majority Leader in the House. I have every reason to believe that Governor Murkowski will sign this measure into law when it reaches his desk.

Alcohol May Be Banned For Violent Felons

Senate Bill 284, which would allow a judge to ban the use of alcohol for certain violent felons, has moved from Senate Finance and is now in Senate Rules awaiting floor action. The Senate Judiciary Committee expanded the list of crimes for which alcohol can be banned to include convictions for driving under the influence of alcohol three or more times, or for a DUI that results in a death or serious injury.

Alcohol abuse that is chronic and results in violent or serious victimization of innocent people should jeopardize the user's privilege to drink alcohol, not only to prevent future crimes, but to send a clear message. Alcohol should never be used as an excuse for violence and those who have those tendencies need to know that they can lose the privilege should they misuse the substance.

Two excellent Internet tools are available to everyone for following legislative action in Juneau. One is a website provided by the Legislature called, "Bill Action and Status Inquiry System" (BASIS). It can be accessed at

www.legis.state.ak.us/basis

The other, "Gavel to Gavel", is accessible at

www.ktoo.org/gavel

It provides you with audio and video coverage of things that are happening in the capitol.

Please feel free to contact my office with any questions about using these websites, or with any questions, comments, or input you have on issues of interest or concern. I look forward to hearing from you and to a productive legislative session.

Senate Bill 309 – Training Alaskans for Gas Pipeline and Heavy Construction

I introduced SB 309 in response to the need to train resident Alaskans to fill the thousands of high paying jobs that will be created in the construction of a gas pipeline and other heavy construction work. In 2005 there were more than 20,000 individuals employed in Alaska construction trades with annual incomes approaching \$60,000. Unfortunately, one in every five, or 20 percent of those jobs, were held by individuals who are recent arrivals to Alaska, according to permanent fund dividend eligibility criteria. These high paying jobs will continue to attract workers from other states and countries. Also, with 45 percent of our resident construction workforce over 45 years old, industry must renew its workforce with thousands of appropriately training workers.

SB 309 will create a stable revenue stream to fund the multi-year commitment necessary to train resident Alaskans for gas line and heavy construction work. Funding may be appropriated to Alaska Works, Inc. or other entities to train resident workers for heavy construction, highway construction, building construction and oil or gas pipeline construction. Funding will leverage industry investment in training facilities and equipment to build private sector training capacity and increase industry capability for sustaining training into the future. SB 309 is slated to sunset in six years and requires an annual report on performance.

Addressing these important training needs now will help stem the flow of Alaskan jobs and salaries to non-residents and improve the lives of resident, working Alaskans.

GOVERNOR'S BOARDS & COMMISSIONS OFFICE IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD ALASKANS

Ms. Susan Fischetti, the governor's Director of Boards & Commissions, is recruiting candidates for vacancies that will occur in the next six months. Please go to the governor's website, <http://gov.state.ak.us/boards/> and view the openings available, or call our office.

Scenic Byway Designation Withdrawn

The proposal to designate the Richardson Highway as a Scenic Byway from Glennallen north to Delta has been withdrawn. After numerous objections to the designation from residents in the Copper River Basin, the working group that nominated the highway withdrew its request before the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities made a final decision.

Federal guidelines for pursuing the nomination clearly require a broad level of public support, which never materialized. A great number of residents expressed opposition to the designation by phone, e-mail, petition, and at a local meeting held in Glennallen on March 25th.

Examination of fiscal records for previous designations and projects associated with the scenic designation are ongoing.

HOUSE DISTRICT CONTACTS:

John Coghill, District 11 - 465-3719 Room 204 Staff:
Rynnieva Moss, Willow Seay Olson and
Karen Lidster

John Harris, District 12 - 465-4859 Room 208 Staff:
Tom Wright, Joel Lounsbury, Pete Fellman and
Sandy Moore

Working Ahead of the Drug Curve

In this age of information it is possible to discover details about dangerous substances and develop public policy before they reach epidemic proportions. A case in point is Salvia Divinorum, a toxic substance known as "Sally D" on the streets.

Like LSD and other hallucinogenic substances, Salvia can cause long-term mental damage including memory loss, delusional behavior, and flashbacks. Both depression and Schizophrenia are also listed as possible side effects. Unless it is added to the state's illegal substance schedule, anyone who can convince an Internet supplier he or she is at least 18 years of age can legally order it with the click of a mouse.

SB 313 would ban Salvia in Alaska, the same as seven other countries and two other states. It is a dangerous substance that can change a life forever. For more information, including education for your children, visit: www.intheknowzone.com.

The Alaska Court System has a self-help service for citizens interested in representing themselves in certain family legal matters. Call (866) 279-0851

Therriault's Efforts Paying Off

Following passage of a bill I sponsored last year, the State is prosecuting its first on-line predator case. SB 140 prohibits sexually soliciting minors online and providing pornographic materials to minors electronically. In this recent case, charges have been filed against an Anchorage resident for violating both of these new laws.

Other sections of this same new law make it illegal to install Spyware programs on Alaskan's computers. We have received verification that certain Spyware distributors have sent out notices to avoid Alaska now that such activity is illegal here. Well written legislation to protect Alaskans can and will help reduce the misuse of the Internet.

This year I am co-sponsoring Senate Bill 222, which would help protect your personal information from identity theft. I am happy to report that we are making progress in this long and arduous task. I remain committed to these issues and working on laws that benefit people rather than expand government.

New Administrative Hearing System

Another reform measure passed last year, Senate Bill 203, is creating a faster and more efficient hearing process for citizens challenging administrative rules and regulations. Hearing officers in a central office no longer work under the direction of commissioners, but are free to render expeditious and impartial decisions. Past disputes have lingered for years without a decision, preventing further court challenges.

Initial reports show the new streamline process working very well. In addition, we have scrutinized proposed regulations to make sure they do not stray beyond the intent of the law. With passage of HB 424 (the House companion to a bill I sponsored), all new regulations will be reviewed by our existing legislative legal staff for both quality and conformity to state law. This too has proven successful, with identification of several problem regulations. Better government is what these reforms are about. My goal continues to be reducing costs and increasing service to Alaskans.

VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINES:

Constituents who want to register to vote or update their voter registration records should visit www.gov.state.ak.us/lgov/elections/homepage.html or contact the Division of Elections at (907) 451-2835 in Fairbanks to obtain the application form by fax or mail. Six weeks before the primary, the Division will send out a special voters' guide containing information on candidates, absentee voting, polling places, and other election matters.

This year, the primary election will be **Tuesday, August 22nd**. To vote in the primary, you must be **registered no later than Sunday, July 23rd**. Division of Elections offices will be open on that Sunday to serve you. You need to be **registered by Sunday, October 8th** to vote in the general election to be held on **Tuesday, November 7th**. Please mark your calendars and be sure to vote.

House Concurrent Resolution No. 9 proclaims Alaska Agriculture Day the first Tuesday in May 2005 and 2006. It became Legislative Resolve No. 17 on July 1, 2005, and recognizes the contribution of Alaska farmers and those in related industries. The agricultural industry adds more than \$50 million to the state's economy each year. Alaska farmers provide fresh, locally produced agricultural products to Alaskans.

American agriculture, and Alaska agriculture in particular, has a history of innovation, stewardship, and progress.



Gene Therriault baling hay August 15, 2005
in North Pole, Alaska