

Expanding Alaska's Economic Opportunities

“In terms of economic development, the Twenty-third Legislature may very well be viewed as one of the most visionary since the oil pipeline was authorized. Two bills, SB 31 and SB 395, set a real agenda for developing Alaska's rail infrastructure, and begin a process toward eventually connecting with the North American rail system. SB 31 gives us a road map to complete this goal. Meanwhile, the \$500 million in bond authorization contained in SB 395 could have work beginning on an extension to Fort Greely as soon as next year. After establishing the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority last year, we continued to work toward the Knik Arm Crossing, and we've opened new markets in Asia for Alaska's wild salmon.”

–Senator John Cowdery, Chairman Senate Transportation Committee

Alaska is a state with great economic opportunities, many untapped. The Twenty-third Legislature moved closer to realizing Alaska's great potential. The first step in expanding our economic opportunities rests with the people of our state. This Legislature invested more in education than any in Alaska's history. Beyond investing in our people, we have looked to Alaska's resources. From fishing, to natural gas, to mineral resources, to information technology, to transportation infrastructure, this Legislature laid the groundwork for future generations to continue to realize Alaska's economic potential.

The biggest single opportunity for economic development is to get our natural gas to market. At this time, we have two applications for the utilization of Alaska's natural gas, and more are forthcoming. We can finally see an Alaska gas pipeline coming to fruition.

This summer a task force will begin work to ensure that Alaska keeps up with information technology progress with an eye toward keeping Alaska up to date with current and future technological advancements. The first step in this process will be connecting Alaska with fiber optic cable. Alaska's unique geographical location makes it ideally suited to lead the world in the new “technology economics.”

2004 Second Session

HB 10: Group Health Insurance For Private Groups

Allows small businesses, nonprofit organizations, special services organizations, small associations, or self-employed individuals to create associations that can participate in group health insurance plans. These entities can then purchase health insurance coverage for their employees.

Sponsor: Rep. Cheryl Heinze, Rep. Norman Rokeberg

HB 29: Real Property Transactions

Informs and protects consumers and assists the commerce of our state. Shields the public from vicarious liability inherent in our current law and protects small brokers in small communities.

Sponsor: Rep. Norman Rokeberg

HB 209: Municipal Tax: Property Affected By Disaster

Allows municipalities to provide for a tax reduction for property destroyed, damaged or otherwise reduced in value as a result of a disaster.

Sponsor: Rep. Mike Chenault

HB 255: Wage & Hour Act

Amends the Alaska Wage and Hour Act as it relates to the scope of administrative regulations defining a person employed in a bona fide executive, administrative, or professional capacity as it pertains to minimum salaries to require that the minimum salary for that individual be two times the minimum wage for the first 40 hours of employment each week.

Sponsor: Rep. Norman Rokeberg

HB 285: Electronic Transactions & Signature

Codifies the model Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA) in Alaska, allowing the use of electronic records and electronic signatures in any transaction, except those subject to the uniform commercial code.

Sponsor: Rep. Lesil McGuire

HB 288: Changing Name Of Department of Community and Economic Development

Changes the name of the Department of Community and Economic Development to the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic development.

Sponsor: Rep. Vic Kohring

HB 418: Extend Real Estate Commission

Extends the sunset date of the Real Estate Commission until June 2008.

Sponsor: Hou. Labor & Commerce Committee

HB 511: Certificate of Need Program

Levels the playing field by subjecting all those seeking to provide health care services to the same rules whether they lease or build a facility. Increases the \$1 million Certificate of Need threshold by \$50,000 per year until 2014.

Sponsor: Rep. Ralph Samuels

SB 31: Railroad Utility Corridor to & In Canada

Authorizes the Alaska Railroad Corporation to delineate a transportation and utility corridor from its terminus at Eielson Air Force Base to the Alaska-Canada border. Allows the Railroad to investigate extension of the railroad from the border of Canada to connect with the North American railroad system.

Sponsor: Senator John Cowdery

SB 183: Municipal Econ. Development/Taxation

Allows Second Class Boroughs to expend economic development funds collected inside the borough but outside of the cities for projects located throughout the borough, both inside and outside the cities, as long as there is an agreement with the city to cooperatively or jointly provide for economic development.

Sponsor: Senator Ralph Seekins

SB 194: Liquor Delivered to Hotels/Cruise Ships

Allows delivery of up to 72 ounces of beer or up to two bottles of distilled spirits in a gift basket with a floral arrangement to a cruise ship passenger or hotel guest.

Sponsor: Senator Gary Stevens

SB 254: Tourism Marketing Contracts

Reduces the Millenium Plan match from the current 60 percent private sector/40 percent State to a 50/50 match.

Sponsor: Senator Gene Therriault

SB 344: Trusts/Estates/Property Transfers

Makes a host of technical revisions to Alaska's trust and estate laws, including updating provisions relating to virtual representation, clarifying when a trustee can be relieved of liability and adding provisions that other jurisdictions have adopted. Preserves Alaska's position as a premier jurisdiction for trust and estate services.

Sponsor: Senator Ralph Seekins

SB 382: Eminent Domain/Replat of Boundary Changes

Clarifies an ambiguity in existing eminent domain law that unnecessarily limits municipalities in their consideration of replat approval petitions. Authorizes municipalities to adopt replat approval procedures targeted specifically to the eminent domain process.

Sponsor: Senate Transportation Committee

SB 389: Corp. Conversion: Limited Liability Co.

Housekeeping measure to clarify that a subsidiary corporation may convert to a limited liability company (LLC). Helps Alaskan entities to operate more efficiently by allowing conversion of subsidiary corporations to LLC status without having to dissolve and then re-form as an LLC.

Sponsor: Senate Labor & Commerce Committee

SB 395: Extend AK Railroad to Greely/Task Force

Allows the Alaska Railroad Corporation to issue up to \$500 million in tax-free revenue bonds, which would be secured through federal Department of Defense funds, to pay for extending a rail line to Delta Junction and Fort Greely. Depending upon negotiations with the Department, the Railroad could issue the bonds as early as 2005.

Creates a 16 member Task Force, including representatives from all 13 affected local governments, the Railroad, the State Senate, and the House of Representatives, to recommend what level of control local governments should have on Railroad operations throughout the State.

Sponsor: Senate Rules Committee

2003 First Session

HB 79: Alaska Regional Economic Assistance Program

Extends the Alaska Regional Development Organizations (ARDOR) Program until June 1, 2008. Creates regional entities to improve the local economy and eliminate region-wide economic development barriers.

Sponsor: Hou. State Affairs Committee

HB 90: Tax Credit For Salmon Development

Provides a tax credit for salmon product development.

Sponsor: Sen. Gary Stevens by Request Joint Legislative Salmon Industry Task Force

HCR 2: Extend Alaska Railroad To Ft. Greely

Supports a 70-mile extension of the Alaska Railroad from the vicinity of Eielson Air Force Base to the Fort Greely anti-ballistic missile launch facility near Delta Junction.

Sponsor: Rep. Bob Lynn

SR 1: Senate World Trade & State/Federal Relations Committee

Establishes a Senate Special Committee on World Trade and State/Federal Relations.

Sponsor: Senator Gary Wilken

SCR 1: Support Roads/Hot Springs Loop Road

Encourages new economic development generated by new road construction.

Sponsor: Senator Gary Wilken

SJR 4: Endorsing ANWR Leasing

Urges the United States Congress to pass legislation opening the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska, to oil and gas exploration, development and production.

Sponsor: Senator Tom Wagoner