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Representative Tom Anderson

Sponsor Statement House Bill 384

"An Act relating to fines and offenses; amending Rule 8(b), Alaska District Court Rules of Criminal Procedure; and providing for an effective date."

HB 384 proposes to raise the maximum amount a person may be fined to \$750 when found guilty of an infraction or violation as currently provided for in statute. The exception to this is found in *Sec. 2* of this bill that sets \$750 as the minimum fine, with the amount of \$1,000 established as the cap for this type of offense.

In addition, this bill brings fish and game penalty language in Title 16 into alignment with the current statutory definition for a Class A Misdemeanor. In 2002, the Alaska Legislature doubled the fines for Class A misdemeanors from \$5,000 to \$10,000. However, several important Title 16 penalties listed a maximum fine of \$5,000 and thus remained locked at that level. Since some of these penalties went into effect around statehood, it is appropriate to update the maximum fines.

Violations or infractions are both minor offenses and are often confused with one another. Violations are about the same as traffic infractions, except that violations are not traffic offenses. Violations were created as a new class of offense in 1978 when the criminal code was completely revised. Both violations and infractions are non-criminal offenses for which no jail time can be imposed. In 1978, the maximum fine set for infractions was \$300, although some violations impose a \$500 minimum fine. This dollar amount has not changed in almost 30 years.

This increase in the dollar amount is consistent with today's values and begins to allow for inflation since 1978. The increase in the maximum monetary penalty will serve as a further deterrence to those not only found guilty, but for those contemplating any action that might lead to such an act leading to an infraction or violation under law.

In today's society, the most serious infractions and violations are the types of offenses that the public observes daily. The public expects that enforcement action will be taken to insure our collective safety. By increasing the fines levied against those that are found guilty, we act to serve the better good.