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## REPRESENTATIVE JOHN COGHILL

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## **HB 53 Passes the Legislature** *Governor Murkowski Expected to Sign CINA Bill*

(JUNEAU) – Late Monday evening, the Alaska State Senate unanimously passed the Child in Need of Aid Bill, HB 53, sponsored by Representative John Coghill (R-North Pole). Senator Fred Dyson (R-Eagle River) carried the bill in the Senate.

Representative Coghill is thrilled that the bill has passed the legislature. “Families continue to be a priority for me as a legislator and I am happy too, that we have combined several thoughtful proposals into one bill that has received such wide support on both sides of the aisle.”

This legislation was a labor of combined efforts of Representative Rokeberg, Governor Murkowski, and many committee members who contributed to the bill through the committee process.

The bill was amended in the Senate to allow video interviews of sex abuse victims to be admissible during court proceedings. This measure is aimed at ensuring that sex abuse victims under 16 do not have to relive their ordeal numerous times during a trial. The House concurred with the amendment.

Senator Gary Wilken (R-Fairbanks) spoke on the floor regarding HB 53. “I first became aware of Representative Coghill’s work about a year ago during interim when he began holding hearings and working on the legislation. I knew then that he had a passion for this issue. When the bill got to HESS and Finance, I saw the results of the efforts of Representative Coghill, the Governor and Representative Rokeberg. I was impressed by the depth of research and the obvious cooperation between the legislature, the administration and various state agencies to make this bill one that will benefit Alaska’s children for generations to come.”

The Family Rights Act reaffirms the legislature’s intent to protect and preserve families in Alaska and make government accountable for its actions when children are in State custody.

HB 53 is co-sponsored by two other Fairbanks legislators, Representatives Mike Kelly (R-Fairbanks) and Jay Ramras (R-Fairbanks), as well as, two Anchorage legislators, Representatives Lesil McGuire (R-Anchorage) and Norman Rokeberg (R-Anchorage). The bill also includes voluntary relinquishment provisions and open court proceedings proposed by Governor Murkowski.

The bill now awaits the Governor’s signature.

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