

Alaska State Legislature

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Representative Bob Lynn District 31

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House Calls for Clergy to Report Abuse **Connection to People an Important Tool in Protecting Children**

(JUNEAU) – The Alaska House of Representatives approved House Bill 92 by a vote of 32 to six on Friday. Sponsored by Rep. Bob Lynn (R-Anchorage), HB 92 includes members of the clergy as mandated reporters of abuse. Anyone who has been ordained, licensed, listed, or set apart, in accordance with the laws, ceremonial or ritual practices, or discipline of a church or religious organization that has been established on the basis of a community of religious faith, belief, doctrines, or practices must report known or suspected child abuse.

“House Bill 92 is good legislation because it helps protect our children, and, it helps protect the good name of our faith community,” Lynn said.

While HB 92 requires clergy to report abuse, it does not compromise the bond of confidentiality in sanctioned religious communication such as a confession. If the clergy member is part of a tax-exempt religious body, and, if reporting what he or she was told in a confidential communication will break religious doctrine, that clergy member is not under any obligation by HB 92.

“No one is above the law, and that includes the clergy,” Lynn said. “But first, there needs to be a law. When sexual abuse of a child is suspected, it needs to be reported.”

Upon reconsideration, [HB 92](#) will move to the Senate.

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