

Alaska State Legislature

Co-Chair Senator Dave Donley
State Capitol, Room 508
Juneau, AK 99801-2197
(907) 465-3892



Co-Chair Senator Pete Kelly
State Capitol, Room 518
Juneau, AK 99801-2197
(907) 465-2327

Senate Finance Committee

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Contact: Senator Dave Donley, (907) 465-3892

Senate Wants Annual Court Reports

(JUNEAU) – The Alaska Court System would be required to file annual reports under legislation passed today by the Alaska Senate.

“Since 1961, the court system has voluntarily provided annual reports on its administration and activities,” said Sen. Dave Donley (R-Anchorage), co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee. “The reports contain useful data for both the public and Legislature to use in analyzing the effectiveness and efficiency of the court system. By placing the requirement for an annual report in statute, the state avoids the possibility of such reports being halted for any reason.”

Senate Bill 172, sponsored by the Senate Finance Committee, would require not only the information currently contained in the annual report, but also require data on judges’ travel expenses and pay. The report would also have to contain data on the timeliness of decisions and the number of times judicial pay has been withheld for not deciding cases in a timely fashion.

“This is information the public and legislature need to know to evaluate how well the courts are operating, and it is also valuable to the court system for making administrative and managerial decisions,” said Donley. “The annual report effectively provides a current and accessible source for the public and the legislature to review this information.”

Most state departments and agencies are required by state law to produce annual reports. By requiring that the court system produce these reports, SB 172 would hold it to the same statutory reporting standard as the other departments.

SB 172 moves to the House for consideration.

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