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Senate Allows Public Opinion in Filling Vacancy

(JUNEAU) – The Alaska Senate passed legislation today that would require a 5-day waiting period before the governor can fill a United States Senate seat vacancy.

“It is important that Alaskans have the opportunity to voice their opinion on who is best suited to represent them in the U.S. Senate in the event of a vacancy occurring,” said Donley.

The Seventeenth Amendment of the United States Constitution grants state legislatures the exclusive authority to set the terms of temporary appointments to fill vacancies in the U.S. Senate.

Currently Alaskan voters would chose a new U.S. Senator by a special election if a vacated U.S. Senate term is longer than 30 months. However there is no system in place for the public to chose a U.S. Senator, or even express their opinion on who should be appointed, if the remainder of the term is less than 30 months.

“This legislation simply provides a brief period in which Alaskans can express their opinions to the governor about who they believe is the best person for the job,” said Donley. “The governor still retains the power of appointment, but Alaskans will be guaranteed an opportunity to comment before he does so.”

Senate Bill 166 passed the Senate with a vote of 14-5, and a notice of reconsideration was filed.

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