

Alaska State Legislature

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House and Senate HESS Committees

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Senate and House Hold Joint Hearing on Welfare Reform and Welfare Fraud

(Anchorage) -- Senator Lyda Green and Representative Fred Dyson are holding a joint Health, Education, and Social Services Committee hearing between 10 a.m. and 12 a.m. on Monday October 28th, at the Anchorage LIO on the progress on welfare reform; especially on the progress made since the passage of [HB 402](#) radically expanding and redirecting the 'work instead of welfare' orientation of the Division of Public Assistance (DPA). In addition, the committee will hear a report on the patterns of welfare fraud in Alaska and the Alaska efforts to prevent fraud and apprehend fraud perpetrators.

Representative Dyson says, "House Bill 402 was a major mission shift for parts of the DPA. If the administrators have a vision and commitment to focus on putting the welfare applicant to work as opposed to getting them qualified for benefits it can be a boon to the economy and save more scarce state dollars. The new law empowers the DPA to combine several kinds of welfare monies into a funding stream for a temporary subsidized job. Businesses are able to fund a new job position for up to six months and the welfare applicant gets a job, a paycheck, and hopefully a new career instead of a hand out. Other states, that have used this approach, have experience a 65 to 85% success rate at getting people off of welfare roles."

"This approach is novel and radical," said Dyson, "and it won't be successful unless the program administrators put a great deal of energy into making it work. The former director, Jim Nordland, had that vision and we want to assure ourselves that his replacement is putting resources into reorienting the department and working with the private sector to find and/or create jobs. The best welfare is a job. Self-confidence and self-esteem come from accomplishments not pats on the head, smiley faces, and dependence on a hand out. We must continue the gains we have made on welfare reform the last few years."

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