

Alaska State Legislature

Session:
State Capitol Building, Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Phone: (907) 465-4958
Fax: (907) 465-4928



Interim:
P.O. Box 670190
Chugiak, AK 99567
Phone: (907) 694-4958
Fax: (907) 694-0549

Senator Rick Halford District M

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Contact: Sen. Rick Halford, 465-4958

Halford Bill Helps World Winter Games

(JUNEAU) – The Senate Finance Committee heard testimony on Thursday on a plan to provide funding for the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games.

Senate Bill 80, sponsored by Sen. Rick Halford (R-Chugiak), makes a special appropriation of \$500,000 to provide critical support for the games. Despite raising slightly in excess of \$16 million, the World Winter Games – Alaska Committee will still fall slightly short of funds needed to pay for food and housing expenses for Special Olympics athletes and their coaches.

“Given what an honor, as well as an opportunity, it is to host this event, I feel the state should participate by assisting with a small percentage of the World Games costs,” said Halford. “The staff and volunteers of Special Olympics World Winter Games – Alaska has done an incredible job in raising the vast majority of the necessary funds for the games. I feel it is appropriate for the State of Alaska to provide this last portion of economic assistance to ensure that the World Winter Games in Anchorage are a success”.

The committee heard testimony from Alaska residents in support of the appropriation, including Justin Roberts, Niall Bo Johnson and John Magalotti, three Special Olympic athletes from Juneau.

“I have competed as a snow boarder in Special Olympics for the last two years and it is really fun,” said Magalotti. “It is fun meeting new people and I am excited to get to meet people from so many different countries at the World Games.”

Over 2,000 athletes representing 80 nations will come together in Anchorage for the 7th Special Olympics World Games in Anchorage. The games begin March 4th and continue for nine days. Athletes will compete in seven winter sports: Alpine Skiing, Cross-Country Skiing, Snowboarding, Snow-Shoeing, Floor Hockey, and Figure and Speed Skating. The games will be the largest sporting event to ever be held in Alaska.

SB 80 passed out of the Finance Committee and now moves to the Senate Rules Committee.

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