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Senator Robin Taylor District A

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Senate Keeps HAMS Operating

(JUNEAU) – The Alaska Senate passed legislation today ensuring that municipalities will give amateur radio operators reasonable zoning allowances to help keep them on the air.

“When disaster strikes in Alaska, our amateur radio operators, or HAMS, are there,” said Sen. Robin Taylor (R-Wrangell). “Within 15 minutes of the Good Friday earthquake in 1964, a Valdez radio operator was broadcasting damage reports and calls for aid. This commitment continues today. Amateur radio operators assisted with emergency communications during the Miller’s Reach fire in 1996, and the avalanches in Turnagain Pass and on the Thane Road in Juneau last spring.”

In 1985 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a rule that requires zoning authorities to reasonably accommodate amateur radio operators’ antenna needs. Senate Bill 78, sponsored by Taylor, would follow 10 other state legislatures by supporting this federal rule.

SB 78 would not allow municipal restrictions on radio antenna heights to be lower than the established FCC guidelines as outlined according to population density for a given area. The legislation would also allow radio antennas that are already built to remain if municipalities pass new zoning restrictions.

“Alaska is a vast country and when disaster strikes, quick and reliable communication is essential for saving lives and getting communities re-connected to the state as quickly as possible,” said Taylor. “Because of the key role our amateur radio operators play in our communications system, it is in the best interest of the state to help keep them on the air.”

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