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Senator Robin Taylor

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Taylor Supports Knowles' Commitment **To Fight For Alaska's Sovereignty**

(JUNEAU) – The Senate Judiciary Committee learned this morning that the governor has not yet decided whether the state will appeal the 9th Circuit Court of Appeal's decision in the Katie John case during testimony from State Attorney General Bruce Botelho.

“Our meeting with Mr. Bothelo confirmed that he agrees with the Judiciary Committee that this case is crucial to the sovereignty of this state,” said Sen. Robin Taylor (R-Wrangell), chair of the Senate Committee. “He told the committee that he has sufficient staff and financial resources to pursue the appeal, and that his staff is currently working to ensure that the necessary documents will be ready if the governor does go forward with this matter.”

The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals recently affirmed the lower court decision in the matter of Katie John v. United States, allowing federal control of some of the state's navigable waters. The State of Alaska now has 90 days from the date of the decision on May 7, 2001, to appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, and if it fails to do so within the allowed time, the decision will stand.

“When the committee questioned Mr. Botelho regarding the governor's equivocation on this decision, the attorney general said that Knowles was weighing all of his options and the differing opinions he was hearing from Alaskans,” said Taylor.

Knowles stated in an opinion piece published on March 3, 2000 in the Anchorage Daily News that he “believes it is his clear responsibility, even in the face of a difficult political battle, to vigorously defend this important aspect of state sovereignty ... to the Supreme Court if necessary.”

“The governor is under political pressure to go back on his commitment, but a man's word is his bond,” said Taylor. “The Judiciary Committee is prepared to do everything it can to support the governor in defending Alaska's sovereignty before the Supreme Court.”

The members of the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously agreed to draft and sign a letter to the governor and the attorney general publicly declaring their support of the governor and his commitment to appeal the U.S. Supreme Court in the matter of Katie John v. the United States.

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