



Health, Education, and Social Services Committee  
Alaska State Legislature  
House of Representatives

**HB 162—ABSENCES UNDER LONGEVITY BONUS PROGRAM  
SPONSOR STATEMENT**

**“An Act relating to absences from the state under the longevity bonus program.”**

**PURPOSE**

[HB 162](#) changes two longevity bonus date clauses. First, it increases the allowable paid absence from 30 to 60 consecutive days. Second, it extends the unpaid sabbatical from 90 consecutive days to three years.

**BACKGROUND**

Recipients of the longevity bonus are people who were at least 65 years of age and resided in the state for at least one year immediately preceding application for a longevity bonus no later than December 31, 1996. By increasing the allowable paid absence from 30 to 60 days, seniors would be able to leave the state for up to 60 days while continuing to receive their longevity bonus. We have heard from many seniors who want to drive out of state to visit their family or need to leave to care for family but cannot because of the current 30-day restriction.

Extending the unpaid sabbatical from 90 days to three years would respond to another senior concern. Often, either because of the winters, medical treatment, or extended trips to care for family, longevity bonus recipients leave the state for extended periods of time. Currently, they lose their eligibility for the program if they leave for more than a total of 180 days out of the year or 90 days at one time. Due to this restriction, many seniors fly back every 90 days to keep their eligibility. Extending the unpaid leave to three years would allow seniors to leave the state for up to three years without being dropped from the program.

**SUMMARY**

The longevity bonus is extremely important to many of its recipients, especially those who are low income. By extending the allowable paid absence to 60 days and by extending the unpaid sabbatical to three years, seniors would be able to leave the state without a penalty.