

Sponsor Statement for HB 426

State Agency Reports/Electronic Forms

An Act requiring state agencies to provide for electronic submission of forms and relating to annual reports of state agencies.

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HB 426 is first and foremost a cost-savings measure. However, many other benefits are derived from this type of initiative in the areas of Government Quality, Accessibility, Environmental Awareness, Paper Reduction, and Efficiency of Labor.

Firstly, the concern heard most revolving around the budget is the issue of government waste. HB 426 would eliminate a large amount of that waste. The legislation would require state entities to make electronic submission forms for all permits, request, forms, and applications, for both internal and external users; unless it is proven to be technically infeasible or fiscally irresponsible to the Department of Administration or the Alaska Legislative Council. Although there would be an initial cost of developing the electronic submission forms, the long-range saving from reducing the amount of paper, stamps, envelopes, faxing, and other office supplies in itself, would be worth it.

Many departments have already established electronic forms and reporting for some things. These pilot programs have demonstrated time and again the savings associated with the use of technology. The Department of Fish & Game installed a program for their permits, which cost \$90,000 for set up. It in the end saves them roughly \$87,000 per year. Granted the savings margin for all these programs will not be comparatively as large but will save money. In these times of critical fiscal situations we must do what we can to eliminate waste from the system. It is this type of "fat trimming" the public desires.

Secondly, with the development of electronic communication and its rapid proliferation throughout Alaska, the continual distribution of hard copy reporting, is an inefficient, costly and unnecessary component of our system. The bill does provide that hard copies may be obtained upon request. The intent of the bill is to minimize costs of reporting by encouraging more Internet information transactions.

Thirdly, regarding the areas of Government Quality and Accessibility, HB 426 would make Alaska more of a 24/7 state instead of an 8-5 state. Additionally, there is the issue of having more information stored in a database, which can easily be backed up and stored conveniently, in the event of a Natural disaster or other event that would cause many paper files to be lost. Moreover, it provides a medium for greater accessibility to the government by disabled people and the homebound elderly. Quality initiatives like this are what the government needs in order to show the public they are working on making government more convenient and "user friendly."

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Fourthly, Alaska has unfortunately and undeservedly developed a reputation for being environmentally insensitive. The passage of this legislation will help show that we are an environmentally aware state. It will show our willingness to reduce consumption of resources and to help rehabilitate the states reputation.

Lastly, HB 426 would free up staff time. Agreeably, more staff time is something that all departments need. We are in a state of economic down turn, and can't afford to hire more staff. This bill will free up staff time from paper shuffling and data entry so that staff can work on more vital tasks, thus reducing the need for additional people.

In conclusion, HB 426 is not saying we should replace the existing systems, as undoubtedly there will be people who will not have access to, nor the desire to, use computers. However, it is saying we should supplement our existing system so people who will use them can. The majority of people you meet 35 or under will have some experience with computers, and many Alaskans do use them on a regular basis, with more learning every day. This bill in the end will save money, time, and resources, while making the government more accessible, improving Alaska's image, and instilling confidence in the people that we are doing what we can to eliminate waste from government.