

**SPONSOR STATEMENT  
HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1**

**Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to the duration of a regular session.**

House Joint Resolution 1 proposes an amendment to Alaska's Constitution that would limit regular legislative sessions to 90 consecutive calendar days. If this resolution passes, the proposed constitutional amendment would be presented to the voters at the 2002 general election. The voters would then decide the fate of this proposal.

Ninety days is more than enough time for the Legislature to complete its business. In an era of decreasing budgets, reducing the session by thirty days would save state funds. Shorter sessions would: (1) save approximately \$1.5 million in per diem and staffing costs; (2) aid in candidate recruitment; (3) focus the public attention; and (4) stop wasting time. Other states can do their work in 90 days or less -- Alaska should be able to accomplish this also. Our neighbor, Washington, is scheduled to be in session from January 8 to April 22 this year, a little over 90 days. Fourteen other states have legislative session of 90 days or less.

Another benefit of shorter sessions is that Alaskans want citizen-legislators. They feel legislators should be able to carry on a livelihood outside of legislative work. Shorter sessions would encourage a larger number of people to run for office and still be able to make a living at their everyday jobs.

Prior to 1984, the Legislature had no time limit on the number of days it could remain in session. The voters approved the present 120-day limit on November 6, 1984. Since that time, it has been amply proven that the Alaska Legislature can operate within a time limit. It is now time to shorten that session limit so that the business of the people can be addressed in a reasonable manner within a reasonable time limit.

One criticism of the 90-day session starting in January is that Alaska's Spring Revenue forecast, upon which we base the following fiscal year's budget, comes out in late March or early April. My answer to that problem: start the session later in the year. Alaska's Constitution currently provides that the Legislature convene on the fourth Monday in January but gives the Legislature the right to change that convening date by law. This date has been changed to the second Monday of January except after a gubernatorial election. A later start date would take care of some of the problems concerning Spring budget forecasts.

Your positive consideration of this measure would be appreciated.

**ED1:02/15/2001**