

# Sponsor Statement

## HJR 3

### **Constitution Amendment: Session Limit/Interim Committee**

***“Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to terms of legislators, to meetings of legislative committees, and to the length of regular sessions of the legislature”***

HJR 3 would constitutionally limit the length of the legislative session to 90 days. This change will have direct positive effects of reducing the cost of government, it will actively help foster a citizen legislature, and directly increase governmental efficiencies.

Legislative members, having been elected the previous fall, would be sworn-in in December. Legislative sessions would then begin on the second Monday in February. The legislative session would have a scheduled end in mid-May. Committees would be specifically authorized to meet during the interim and review pre-filed legislation before convening in February.

HJR 3 is a hybrid approach that addresses many of the concerns that have arisen during review of other proposals regarding altering the legislative session. Annual revenue forecasts come out in March; thereby this schedule would allow the Finance Committees to begin hearings on the Governor's budget immediately upon convening. The approach taken in HJR 3 would not affect the amount of time available to analyze the revenue forecasts and adopt a budget.

Implementation of this proposal would have a direct affect on the fostering of a citizen's legislature. Many people, who otherwise would take an active role in government, do not do so due to the sacrifices of uprooting their family and careers to move to Juneau for at least 120 days of the year. Decreasing session by 30 days would lessen this impact significantly, making legislative service much more attractive to a greater number of Alaskans.

Additionally, having committee meetings outside of session will allow legislators to more closely interact with their constituents by holding hearings in their districts as well as in the areas impacted by various legislation. This would also make great strides in the goal of giving direct access to the legislature for the multitude of citizens who currently feel alienated from the legislative process because of geographic and economic constraints of visiting the capitol during a legislative session.

Preliminary estimates show passage of HJR 3 would result in \$1.5 million annual savings. The legislature must show its leadership in decreasing the cost of state government. Reducing the legislative session to 90 days is one way to achieve this goal, bringing to reality the 'lead by example' mantra as all departments of state government are experiencing downward pressure on their budgets. The activity of the legislature can be accomplished in 90 days, as many state legislatures around the country have little problem conducting the business of their states in much shorter periods, while serving far greater populations with much larger budgets.

I urge your support of HJR 3 to increase efficiencies in government operations, to decrease the cost of state government, and to help foster a citizen legislature for the benefit of all Alaskans.