

**SPONSOR STATEMENT
SB 80**

**Special Appropriation to the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs for
a grant to 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games.**

This special appropriation of \$500,000 is to meet the immediate and unanticipated food and housing expenses for Special Olympics athletes and their coaches. The games will be held in Anchorage beginning March 4, it is therefore essential this appropriation be approved.

It is an honor for Alaska to be the host of this nine-day celebration of athletic achievement. Over 2,000 athletes representing 80 nations will come to our state to compete in seven winter sports: Alpine Skiing, Cross-country skiing, Snowboarding, Snow-shoeing, Floor Hockey, and Figure and Speed Skating, the eyes of the world will be upon the City of Anchorage and the State of Alaska. The 7th Special Olympics World Winter Games will be the largest international sporting event ever to be held in Alaska. Hosting the games also represents an excellent opportunity to showcase our state to the rest of the country and the world.

The Alaska Legislature has previously expressed its support and commitment to the 2001 World Games through passage of

- **SJR 19 (Senator Taylor-1997) Supported Anchorage as 2001 games site**
- **SB 261 (Senator Miller-1998) Provided for a \$4 million guarantee of the minimum \$8 million that would have to be raised to host the games. Due to excellent fundraising, the \$4 million guarantee did not have to be satisfied.**

Given what an honor and opportunity it is to host this event, I feel we should help meet the unexpected funding shortfall, and provide state participation by funding a small percentage of the costs to meet the \$16.6 million World Games budget requirement.

Special Olympics World Winter Games - Alaska has done an incredible job in raising the vast majority of the necessary funds through private sector fundraising. I feel it is appropriate for the State of Alaska to provide this economic assistance to help meet this last portion of total expenses as the start of the Winter World Games is rapidly closing in.