



## Alaska State Legislature Senate Majority News

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### **Governor Signs Workers' Compensation Bill Into Law** *Legislation Protects Workers and Business Owners*

(Anchorage) – A turning point in the state's mission to reform its Workers' Compensation system was taken today when Governor Frank Murkowski signed SB 130 into law.

Sen. Ralph Seekins (R – Fairbanks) guided the legislation through the senate. "For years small business owners have pleaded with the state to do something about skyrocketing rates that threatened to put them out of business. SB 130 will slow rate growth and become the foundation for more legislation that will make the system even more workable for employers and employees."

Alaska currently has the second highest workers' compensation rates in the nation.

SB 130 also creates a progressive appeals board to hear and resolve cases filed by injured workers. The new board will deliver a new level of consistency to the appeals process.

Sen. Gene Therriault (R – North Pole) won provisions to protect the privacy of Alaskans when they file workers' compensation claims. The new language prevents commercial entities from using the Public Records Act to obtain individual records from the state Workers' Compensation Division.

"When someone files a workers' compensation claim they expect a reasonable amount of privacy. The old system allowed sensitive personal information to be made available to people or organizations trying to make a buck off the system. From now on injured workers don't have to worry about that," said Sen. Therriault.

Next session lawmakers and the administration will consider further steps to reforming Alaska's Workers' Compensation program.

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