



Alaska State Legislature Senate Majority News

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Alaskans Will Cast Advisory Vote on Same-Sex Benefits *Fourth Special Session Comes to a Close*

(JUNEAU) — Today the Alaska Senate ended the fourth special session of the 25th Alaska Legislature after passing two bills dealing with state benefits for same-sex couples.

HB 4002 asks the public to weigh in on the issue. It requires a statewide advisory vote to be held on April 3, 2007. The bill passed 12 - 7. Alaskans will be asked to vote yes or no to the following question:

Shall the legislature adopt a proposed amendment to the state constitution to be considered by the voters at the 2008 general election that would prohibit the state, or a municipality or other subdivision of the state, from providing employment benefits to same-sex partners of public employees and to same-sex partners of public employee retirees?

“Although the court ordered the state to provide these benefits, legislators can’t ignore their responsibility in setting public policy. Our job is to try and find a resolution to this issue and the first step is to find out what the public thinks,” said Senate Majority Leader Gary Stevens (R – Kodiak).

“Eight years ago Alaskans overwhelmingly approved the definition of marriage amendment to Alaska’s constitution for weight of public direction regarding same-sex benefits. I believe it’s only appropriate we go back to them to see if they want benefits, paid for with public money, to go to same-sex partners of state employees and retirees,” Senate Finance Co-Chair Lyda Green (R – Wasilla).

HB 4001 prevents the Commissioner of Administration from implementing a court order to provide same-sex benefits without first getting specific statutory authority from the legislature. It passed 11 - 6.

The Senate adjourned Sine Die.

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