

**Sponsor Statement for Senate Joint Resolution 19**  
(February 16, 2006)

Some 2 million infections a year are acquired in hospitals and an estimated 90,000 people die as a result of these infections, making it the sixth-leading cause of death in the country. The cost to the consumers is between \$4.5 and \$11 billion a year. Given these alarming statistics, it is vital for consumers to have full knowledge of how medical facilities fare with infection rates. Passage of SJR 19 can help accomplish this goal by providing lawmakers, state health officials and medical professions the opportunity to craft workable legislative recommendations for the collection of data on hospital-acquired infection rates.

SJR 19 creates the Task Force to Assess Public Reporting of Health Care Associated Infections. This eleven member panel will consist of two senators, two representatives, the Chief of Epidemiology for the State of Alaska, one healthcare consumer from rural Alaska, one healthcare consumer from urban Alaska, a representative of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, a representative from the Alaska Chapter of the Association of Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, and a representative of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association.

During the 2006 Legislative Interim, the Task Force will be asked to:

- (1) Review experience to date with public reporting of hospital-associated infections.
- (2) Develop a white paper to be used for drafting legislation for reporting of healthcare associated infections. The white paper will address the unique healthcare challenges of Alaska and would encompass:
  - (a) Mechanism(s) for reporting;
  - (b) Identifying data sources and possible outcome and process measures to be reported;
  - (c) Timeline for implementation;
  - (d) Infrastructure needs for supporting a robust ongoing reporting system for dissemination of accurate data.

I ask for your support of this important legislation.