

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE BILL STOLTZE

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Sponsor Statement for House Bill 226

“An Act relating to the sale, offer for sale, representation, and labeling of food or other agricultural products as organic, and to the state organic certification program; and providing for an effective date.”

In 2001 the final rule for the federal definition of “organic” was adopted; the law allowed for a transition period from mid-2001 to October, 2002, giving states 14 months to come into line with the federal definition of organic. [House Bill 432](#) was introduced in April of 2002, and it contained language to make this change. It did not pass before the twenty-second legislative session adjourned, yet the need for the change still lingers.

[House Bill 226](#) is simply a measure to bring the state of Alaska’s definition of organic agricultural products in line with the federal definition. It would create an Alaska organic certification program, providing in-state certification for organic agricultural producers, processors, and handlers.

At this time organic operators are paying to fly certification specialists to Alaska whose fees may be as high as \$1,500 to \$3,000 to verify Alaskan operations comply with the federal organic standards. With the passage of HB 226, qualified inspectors would complete the inspection process, with the final certification process being performed by a designated state official.

I ask for your consideration and support of HB 226 to alleviate the unnecessary burden on organic agricultural operators for the expense, and timing issues, created by not having an Alaskan organic certification program.

DISTRICT 16

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