



# Senate Majority News

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## **Majority Works With Gov. On Central Hearing Panel** **Move Another Step in Promise for Smaller; More Fair State Government**

**(Juneau)** – Alaskans who find themselves going through an administrative hearing process may see some positive changes in the near future, thanks to a cooperative effort between the Legislative majority and the governor’s office.

Currently when a person or business owner wants to challenge an administrative regulation they must appeal to a hearing officer, who works for the department that implemented the regulation being appealed. Gov. Frank Murkowski has agreed to have his administration work with the Legislature in exploring new ways of making the regulation appeal process more fair, more efficient and less costly. One possible solution being looked at by Sen. Gene Therriault (R-North Pole) the chairman of the Administrative Regulation Review committee is the implementation of “Independent Administrative Hearings– Through a Central Panel.”

“We have two goals in pursuing this idea,” said Therriault. “Provide better due process to Alaskans who find themselves before an administrative hearing – and improve timeliness in scheduling hearings and in the issuance of decisions following those hearings.”

Sen. Therriault says if those two goals can be achieved, there would be significant savings to the state and to Alaskan business owners.

According to Department of Administration commissioner Mike Miller, 26 different states and numerous municipal governments around the country have adopted a central hearing panel in some form or another. Miller says everything is on the table for consideration, but explains that not every adjudication officer’s duties are the same.

“We will be doing assessments to see how the public would be best served by a central hearing panel and how to keep the costs down as we revamp our hearing system,” said Miller.

Neither the Legislature nor the administration has a timeline for introducing a specific bill, but a commitment is in place to research, in detail a new hearing process for Alaska.

“Alaskans have demanded a less costly, more efficient government,” said Therriault. “To that end, we will seek the counsel of national experts who have helped install central panels in other states – and try to develop a plan that will best serve Alaska.”

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