

Alaska State Legislature

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Sponsor Statement SB 203

[Senate Bill 203](#) is a culmination of many years of effort to achieve a more efficient, timely, and fair administrative hearing process. The purpose of this legislation is to separate the administrative adjudication process away from the agencies that write, promulgate and enforce administrative law.

Instead of allowing hearing officers to be typical employees and extensions of the agencies whose administrative law they adjudicate, SB 203 is designed to give these administrative adjudicators a more independent and protected station from which to deliver timely due process through fair and objective hearings. This is accomplished through the creation of a model central independent hearing office, and the application of new protections and rules for all hearing officers in and out of that office.

As tempting as an all-inclusive type of reform might be, two critical obstacles have caused us to move in a more incremental approach. The first is a commitment to keep costs down. The second is sensitivity to both employees and administrators who will be involved in the reform. The model central office created in this bill will over time incorporate more hearing functions and officers. In the interim it will provide resources, training and alternative dispute resolution for all state hearing officers.

As a greater separation between hearing officers and agencies occurs, opportunities to create an efficient and more professional administrative hearing process in a central panel will be realized. It is through these efficiencies that any initial start-up costs are soon negated, and significant savings accrue over time. Of course the reductions in time and expense to citizens and businesses, though never reflected in fiscal notes, are equally important components in this major reform.

The primary objectives of this act are to insure better quality, less costly, less time consuming, and fairer administrative hearings. Achieving these goals will not only be beneficial to our constituents, but good for business, and government as well. The creation of independent hearing offices in other states has enjoyed bi-partisan support. I look forward to the same in Alaska as SB 203 proceeds through our legislative process.