



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

News From The House Majority

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CONTACT: Representative Bill Thomas – (907) 465-3732

Thomas Contacts Governor in Support of Continued *Fairweather* Service

(JUNEAU) – Representative Bill Thomas (R-Haines) has written a letter to Governor Frank Murkowski regarding the ongoing labor negotiations concerning the *M/V Fairweather*.

Representative Thomas is following the talks between the unions and the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) and is very concerned by what the cessation of the *Fairweather* service would mean for his constituents in Haines and Skagway. His letter, dated January 13th, reads, in part:

“My constituents depend on the *Fairweather*, and the Alaska Marine Highway System, in a variety of important ways. The new vessel has already shown its potential to improve convenience, and I trust that as the AMHS continues to work out the typical bugs to be expected with a new vessel, the *Fairweather* will be able to provide reliable, predictable and effective transportation in northern Southeast Alaska.”

The letter to Governor Murkowski ended by saying, “As you and your staff continue through this process, I simply ask that the public service provided by the *Fairweather* and the AMHS be continued so that my constituents can go about their daily business assured that the ferry will be there for them.”

According to a recent Department of Transportation press release, the *Fairweather* will cease operations on Sunday, January 23, 2005 in order to travel to Ketchikan where it will be tied up until being dry-docked in mid-February.

“I understand the process that the state and the unions are going through, and while I cannot and do not wish to interfere with negotiations, I want to see the interests of my constituents protected,” said Representative Thomas. “This deadlock is very disappointing. It is the public that suffers in this situation, and that's not acceptable. Both the governor and the unions are responsible to the people, and I'd like to see them come to an agreement so the ferry can keep running.”

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