

# ALASKA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SENATOR JOHN COGHILL

### Senate Bill 89 Legislative Ethics Amendments **Sponsor Statement**

This bill is a product of discussions by the Select Committee of Legislative Ethics over the past couple of years.

First the bill makes a couple of housekeeping amendment. It adds reference to the compassionate gifts statute to AS 24.60.030(a) as an exception to "Prohibited conduct and conflicts of interest. It also places in statute an allowance of use of legislative mailing lists for campaign purposes.

Two amendments requested by the committee address tickets to charity events and disclosure of gifts of tickets for and gifts from charitable events that have a value of more than \$250.00. They allow persons who are not lobbyists to give a gift of a ticket to a charitable event sanctioned by the Legislative Council to a legislator or legislative employee that has a value of more than \$250.00. However, the recipient of the ticket must disclose to the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics the value of the ticket that exceeds the \$250.00 limit. The bill clarifies that lobbyists, immediate family members of lobbyists, or persons acting on behalf of a lobbyist may not exceed the \$250 limit.

The bill also draws a bright line for legislators and legislative staff to follow for assisting constituents with problems they encounter with state agencies. Once an issue has been appealed to an administrative hearing officer, the legislator or legislative staffer may no longer make contacts with the agency, unless that person is a licensed professional to represent a person in such a proceeding and is being compensated for that representation.

After over three years of discussion this bill is a first attempt to set standards by which a legislator or a legislative staffer can participate in a partisan activity or a campaign fundraiser when traveling on legislative business. It also extends the reporting deadline for reporting gifts of travel from 30 to 60 days.

The bill adds public members of the ethics committee to the statute prohibiting members from knowingly making unauthorized disclosure of confidential information.

The committee recommended a statute that would allow an alternate member of the ethics committee who participates in the beginning of a proceeding to participate in the entire proceeding. The Chief Justice of the Alaska Supreme Court would also be required to appoint an alternate.

The bill clarifies that disclosures prohibited by state and federal confidentiality laws are not required by the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics.