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April 11, 2011

Senator Dennis Egan
Chairman, Labor and Commerce
State Capitol, Rm 510
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Via fax and e-mail
Dana_Owen@legis.state.ak.us

Dear Senator Egan:

I am writing to urge your support for SB 116 that would allow for the “voluntary use” of collectively bargained workers compensation programs that are designed to improve the delivery of medical benefits to Alaska workers injured in the job site.

Collectively bargained workers compensation programs are currently used in California, Hawaii, Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Maine, and Nevada. These programs have been an effective method of reducing accidents, and lowering workers compensation costs for employers through the cooperative efforts of labor, management, and insurance carriers.

Benefits of Collectively Bargained Workers Compensation Programs

- Formation of joint labor-management safety committees to improve safety performance.
- Establishment of lists of medical providers, medical specialists, and qualified medical examiners to improve medical treatment.
- Use of alternative dispute resolution process to help resolve disputes.
- Use of an independent ombudsman and case nurse manager to work with injured workers, employers, and insurance carriers to help resolve disputes.
- Development of return to work or modified job responsibilities under the supervision of treating physicians to help injured workers return to work.

Nothing in SB 116 authorizes any provision of a collective bargaining agreement to reduce the entitlement of an employee to compensation for temporary total disability, temporary partial disability, permanent partial disability, or any other benefits established under the Alaska workers' compensation statutes.

I am requesting your support for SB 116 that would allow for the “voluntary use” of collectively bargained workers compensation programs by Alaska employers.

Sincerely,

Tom V Zimmerman
President