

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

VIOLENT CRIMES COMPENSATION BOARD

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February 22, 2010

Representative Beth Kerttula
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

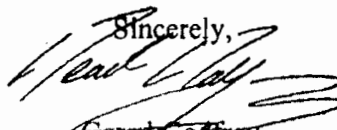
Dear Representative Beth Kerttula:

Thank you for considering HB 52, "An Act authorizing psychological counseling for jurors serving in criminal trials who are traumatized by graphic evidence or testimony." We understand that certain criminal trials can generate serious levels of stress among jurors that can last weeks or months after the trial is over. Traditionally, jurors in a critical trial end their service without ascertaining whether or not the events of that trial have had any psychological impact. For years, there have been cases of post-trial jurors experiencing their own mental pain and difficulty focusing back on their daily lives. Symptoms of juror stress manifest themselves as a number of physical and psychological reactions, including increased anxiety and frustration, disrupted eating and sleeping routines, nausea, depression, and anger and hostility. In many instances, talking to jurors about their symptoms validates their feelings and helps them understand that what they are experiencing is normal and can in itself bring considerable stress relief.

After exposure to a highly graphic criminal case jurors can develop stress by having to relive the traumatic experiences of the victim. For some, it is difficult to suddenly step back into their own world without some form of closure. We believe this is a unique opportunity for courts to have a positive interaction with individuals from the communities they serve. A juror who is asked to fulfill their civic duty should be protected from the potentially negative health effects of the trial process.

In general, post-trial group counseling could reduce stress and offer information on mental health services for those who might need it, provide closure, promote confidence in the judicial system, and enhance satisfaction. We support HB 52 because it would offer traumatized jurors access to group counseling services to help counteract the negative effects which may result from jury service.

Sincerely,



Gerard Godfrey
Chairman