

Alaska State Legislature

Senator Pete Kelly

Interim

1292 Sadler Way Ste. 308
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
Phone - (907) 451-4347
Fax - (907) 451-4348



Session

State Capitol, Rm 516
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone - (907) 465-3709
Fax - (907) 465-4714

Sen.Pete.Kelly@akleg.gov

Sponsor Statement – SCR 14

“Relating to health and social services best practice models and identifying citizen networks to achieve solutions to health and social problems in the state.”

Alaska leads the United States in the rates of suicide, forcible rape, alcohol-related deaths, domestic violence, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and many other social ills. Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 calls for the development of a grassroots, community-based effort to create positive social norms and institute regional best practice models addressing Alaska’s social challenges.

While the State of Alaska currently faces difficult budget cuts and a challenging fiscal environment, the costs related to social ills continue to rise. According to the McDowell Group report, “Economic Costs of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, 2012 Update,” the total cost to Alaska’s economy of drug and alcohol dependence in 2010 was \$1.2 billion dollars. This cost has grown from the 2003 reported cost of \$738 million at the rate of \$66 million dollars per year. While the economic costs of these social challenges are drastic, they pale in comparison to the ongoing social and personal costs associated with them. Suicide, domestic violence, and forcible rape continue to have a profound impact on the citizens of Alaska.

SCR 14 establishes an “on-the-ground” strategy for addressing Alaska’s social challenges with the identification and empowerment of informal networks that already exist within communities. The intent is when members of a community need help, to utilize those who already are the go-to individuals providing support. SCR 14 will encourage development and use of natural helper networks to establish positive norms as well as the creation of community-based regional best practice models.

Renewing and fostering positive social norms through the empowerment of natural helpers is an essential step towards solving Alaska’s critical health and social challenges. We must begin to transition our focus from the problems of our communities to a more solution oriented approach. SCR 14 promotes the infrastructure and strategy for accomplishing this vital task.