

Alaska State Legislature

Session: (Jan-May)
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Pete Kott
Speaker of the House

Sponsor Statement **for** **House Bill 271**

"An Act levying and providing for the collection and administration of an excise tax on passenger vehicle rentals; and providing for an effective date."

The travel industry is the second largest private-sector industry in Alaska. There were 1.6 million visitors to the state in 2002 — two visitors for every resident. More Americans are choosing to spend their vacations in the United States since September 11, 2001, when international travel became more uncertain. Alaska's distance from the lower 48 states makes it an interesting destination and adventure; Alaska's geographic size, small population, and natural attractions contribute to a feeling of security for tourists.

The majority of visitors to Alaska come by cruise ship or domestic flight, and many of these visitors rent passenger or recreational vehicles to view our scenery and wildlife. Extra vehicles exacerbate the need for road maintenance and repair and conduces interest in construction of roads into other potential tourist destinations.

House Bill 271 is a way for the State to raise revenues that could be used for road and highway maintenance, repair, and construction as well as contributed to the tourism industry for promotion and marketing. This bill would levy a 15 percent tax on the amount charged for the lease or rental of a passenger vehicle, exempting government employees, and would put us on a par with other states' taxes on rentals. House Bill 271 has the potential of bringing \$7.5 million annually to the State.

At a time when State government spending must be decreased in order to balance the budget, those who benefit from State services must, concurrently, contribute to the support of those services.

2361