

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

Summary of Changes

HB 105 – Denali Wolf Buffer Zone

The original version of this bill created the “Gordon Haber Denali Wolf Special Management Area” within Title 41 (Public Resources), Chapter 21 (Parks and Recreational Facilities). Provisions under this section are administered by the Department of Natural Resources, which has a general mandate to manage natural resources exclusive of wildlife. In contrast, the statutes mandate that the Department of Fish and Game manage wildlife. Given the sponsor’s clear intent to protect wolves around Denali National Park, it is unclear why provisions creating a wolf buffer zone were drafted in a chapter about DNR’s management of land use. Further, the DNR said that since it did not have existing expertise in wildlife management, that the bill could be read to incur a substantial cost on the department.

In working with Fish and Game, the sponsor learned that there were several possibilities for proscribing the hunting and trapping of wolves around Denali. Although there are existing forms of protected areas such as refuges, sanctuaries, and critical habitat areas, it has been recommended that the simplest and most cost effective way to adequately protect the wolves in the area is to merely close it to hunting and trapping of wolves. Although the area will no longer be named for Gordon Haber, by finding the best mechanism to effectuate his life goal of protecting wolves, his spirit will live on through this legislation.

The purposes of the bill remain: to protect wolves for future generations of Alaskan residents and visitors; and to bolster the economy of the state’s most important tourism asset through statistically valuable wolf sightings. While it may be argued that a bill affecting a discrete area of the state may be verboten “special legislation,” common law allows this when the measure is of statewide importance. As was well-established during our first bill hearing and in the supporting documents, the purposes of this measure are clearly of statewide importance: the entire state benefits from tourism that the Park attracts and all residents and visitors to Alaska for generations to come will undoubtedly be amazed by the experience of wolf sightings.