

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 38: Benefits for Workplace Death and Permanent Impairment

House Bill 38 addresses an injustice that came to light when Abigail Caudle, a twenty-six year-old electrical worker, was killed on the job in 2011. Because Ms. Caudle was unmarried and had no dependents, the workers' compensation system paid only for her funeral expenses. HB 38 directs that when a worker dies without a spouse or minor children, then either relatives who depended on that worker for support, or the worker's estate, will receive a respectful amount of compensation.

HB 38 also solves the problem of inadequate financial support of children after their single parent dies on the job. Currently, teenagers may receive only a few months of financial assistance before their support is cut off when they turn eighteen. The bill continues payment of the death benefit for five years after the child reaches legal adulthood.

Finally, HB 38 brings more equitable compensation to workers for permanent injuries, such as loss of an arm. One-time payments for permanent, partial disability have not increased since 2000, and their value has been eroded by inflation. The bill increases the payments to off-set past inflation, and provides an annual adjustment based on the Anchorage Consumer Price Index.

I invite you to discuss this issue with me further and urge you to support this legislation.