

Testimony for CS HB 10

My name is Steve Van Sant and I am the State Assessor for the State of Alaska, located at 550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 1770, Anchorage, AK. As State Assessor, part of my responsibilities are to assist municipalities which includes helping to interpret federal property tax laws, primarily ANCSA, and Alaska property tax statutes. Being involved in the committee hearings of these bills as they are discussed and working with the sponsors of the legislation certainly helps me in assisting assessors around the state in interpreting these laws.

CSHB 10 contains several sections dealing with various property tax exemptions. Sections 1, 2, 4 and 5 are fairly straight forward and I will not address those sections, however, I feel that Section 3 may need some technical clarification for those who will administer the property tax laws of this state, the assessors.

This section amends AS 29.45.050(b)(1) by adding a new subsection (E). This subsection is intended to allow a municipality to exempt any private, nonprofit, four year college that is accredited. This part of the amendment is straightforward and easily understood. The amendment goes on to state that even though it is not a mandated exemption, any private interest should be subject to AS 29.45.030(a)(1)(A). This refers to any leasehold interest of other private parties that may exist. For example, currently the Alaska Pacific University (APU) is a four year, nonprofit, accredited university that would qualify for an exemption under this legislation should it be passed by the legislature and enacted by the Anchorage assembly. At the current time, the Alaska Spine Institute (ASI) leases property from APU and the Anchorage Assessor has determined that the property used by the A.S.I. is taxable and has sent APU, the property owner, a bill for the taxes.

Under CSHB 10, APU, or any four year private, nonprofit, university, would no longer be held liable for taxes of property it might lease out for non-educational purposes. The assessor would be required to assess each lessee for its leasehold interests, and tax bills would be sent to the lessees, not the university. If the lessee failed to pay the property tax due, a municipality could not foreclose on the property, but would be required to take personal action against the lessee as described under AS 29.45.320.

Typically, assessors do not assess a separate a leasehold interest on private property. The entire property is assessed to the property owner, so this legislation is a change from the current assessment of this type of arrangement. This legislation puts all nonprofit university property, state and privately owned, on the same level of taxation in regards to any private, non-educational use of property by other taxable entities, by assessing and taxing the lessee, not the property owner for the non-exempt use.

Steve Van Sant  
State Assessor

Testimony for CS HB 10 - House Finance Committee Hearing March 16, 2008

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I have previously supplied comments regarding Section 3 of CSHB 10. I understand there will be an amendment offered that will clear up confusion that was raised in regards to any private, third party interest (leasehold interest) that may be present on property owned by a private nonprofit university.

I have reviewed the proposed amendment and believe that it will clear up the confusion of how to treat those third party interests. It now reads very similar to the exemption in AS 29.45.030 that attaches to the University of Alaska property where there may be third party interest.

I would support the adoption of this amendment.

Steve Van Sant  
State Assessor