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January 23, 2009

The Honorable Mike Chenault
Speaker of the House
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 208
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Speaker Chenault:

Under the authority of Article III, Section 18, of the Alaska Constitution, I am transmitting a bill repealing the Governor's committee on employment of people with disabilities, creating the state vocational rehabilitation committee, and relating to the committee.

The purpose of this bill is to eliminate the need to change state law every time federal requirements change the number and or constituency of the membership required for the Governor's committee on employment of people with disabilities and to expand its responsibilities to include the functions of an assistive technology advisory council as required under federal law. Since approximately 70 percent of the financing for the committee comes from the federal government, compliance with federal requirements is necessary.

Assisting those with disabilities in obtaining employment is vital to the economic and social well-being of the state. Given the opportunity, these Alaskans have the ability to contribute significantly to our workforce and to our communities, while granting them financial independence and affirmation of their value to society.

The Governor's committee on employment of people with disabilities has been carrying out the responsibilities of the state rehabilitation council identified in 29 U.S.C. 725, as amended. This bill would replace the existing committee with a federally compliant committee and would allow for adjustments necessary to remain in conformance with federal law without the need for further statute changes. The newly created committee's responsibilities would also include the functions of an assistive technology advisory council required under 29 U.S.C 3001.

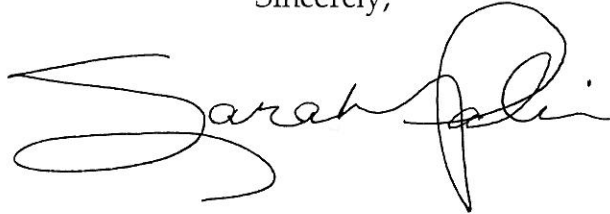
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The bill would also increase the frequency of meetings of the committee, from a minimum of once each year to four times a year. The bill would allow telephonic participation in committee meetings, and would provide for election of the chair by the committee members, subject to the approval of, rather than appointment by, the Governor.

The bill would also provide a reviser's instruction to change the heading of Article 2 of AS 23.15, to reflect the creation of the new committee.

I urge your prompt and favorable action on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sarah Palin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a distinct "P" for "Palin".

Sarah Palin
Governor