

# STATE OF ALASKA

## Department of Labor and Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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**SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR**

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March 11, 2009

The Honorable Kurt Olson  
Chair House Labor and Commerce Committee  
State Capital Building, Room 24  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Olson:

House Bill 89, establishing a State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) is waiting for a hearing by the House Labor and Commerce Committee. The primary purpose of this legislation is to bring current state statute into compliance with federal law. The SVRC will function as the State Rehabilitation Council and the Assistive Technology Advisory Committee, both of which are required by federal law to accept funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration to operate the Vocational Rehabilitation Client Services program and Assistive Technology grant. The SVRC will replace the Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities (GCERPD).

It is important that this legislation pass during this session. Beginning October 2009, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will undergo federal review and monitoring of programs authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Management and organization of the State Rehabilitation Council will be included in this compliance review to determine whether the agency is fully constituted in accordance with federal law and regulations, including membership composition. Current state statutes are not in compliance with the federal laws related to the State Rehabilitation Council or the Assistive Technology Advisory Committee. Current statute was written for a committee that no longer exists, the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

The GCERPD will continue to perform the duties of the State Rehabilitation Council and the Assistive Technology Advisory Committee until this matter is resolved. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation could be sanctioned during the federal review in October. Similar legislation regarding SVRC was introduced during the 25<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session.

The Honorable Kurt Olson

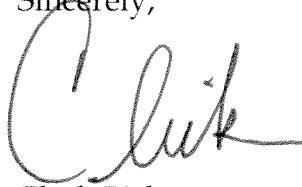
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Please schedule HB 89 for a hearing in the House Labor and Commerce Committee so it can advance through the process for passage this session. Federal compliance will ensure continued funding which is critical to assist Alaskans with disabilities to become employed and have access to appropriate assistive technology services and devices.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. Please contact me or my Legislative Liaison, Paula Scavera at 465-2700 if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clark Bishop". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a stylized "B".

Clark Bishop  
Commissioner