



Alaska State Legislature

Representative Anna Fairclough – House District 17

House Bill 63

“An Act relating to the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.”

The Legislative Task Force, created by House Bill 215 in 2007, was directed to consider the Council’s relationship and consultation with other state agencies; the statutory responsibilities and priorities of the Council; the appointment process for members of the Council; the location of the Council within the state administrative structure; the Council’s compliance with grant management requirements; and the Council’s mission and the focus of the Council’s mission on prevention, intervention, crisis response, and perpetrator accountability.

House Bill 63 provides corrections in law in direct response to the work assigned the Task Force by the Legislature. It is one of a number of actions that are now underway in response to the findings and recommendations of the Legislative Task Force.

It also expands the Council to include representation from the Department of Corrections and Alaska’s rural communities. The Department of Corrections plays a large role in dealing with the perpetrators of domestic violence and sexual assault, but they currently are not a member of the Council.

House Bill 63 also makes staff positions in the Council non-exempt, other than the Executive Director. The Executive Director remains exempt or partially exempt. This change is being recommended by the Task Force because we concur with the Executive Director that the current exempt status creates challenges in the recruitment and retention of quality employees.

The Task Force agreed that it is critical that “public” members not be state employees to ensure that there remain voices on the Council who are independent of state agencies and their influences. HB 63 ensures that “public” positions on the council are not employees of the state.

House Bill 63 changes language in the statute from “shall” to “may” in regards to the Governor consulting the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA) regarding the appointment of public members to the Council. In 2001, the auditor reported that the Council allowed changes in reporting requirements for the grantees of the Network in violation of federal grant guidelines.

Currently, Council members serve two-year terms, only allowing them to serve through one grant cycle. This limits their ability to understand the issues and process that the council goes through in its grant cycle. By extending the term to three years this allows members of the Council to be far more effective.

Implementation of these legislative changes, along with the Council’s new Strategic Plan and other reforms will significantly improve the Council as it attempts to wrestle with the ongoing issues of domestic violence and sexual assault across Alaska.

I urge your support on this important piece of legislation.