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March 30, 2012

Honorable Bob Lynn, Chair
House State Affairs Committee
Alaska Capitol, Room 108
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: SB 53 (Davis)—Support

Dear Chair Lynn:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the House State Affairs Committee to support SB 53, authored by Senator Bettye Davis and co-sponsored by Senators Johnny Ellis and Lesil McGuire.

SB 53 would reestablish the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women.

Women's issues are different from those of the entire population. AARP has always paid particular attention to women's issues simply because they are often unique and need to be viewed through a different lens.

We understand that the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women would address issues of importance to Alaska women of all ages.

But simply from the standpoint of women over the age of 50, we believe the Commission is worthwhile and should be re-established:

- Women are at a higher risk of poverty as they age. Nearly twice as many women as men will face poverty in their retirement years. Women earn 77 cents on the dollar compared to men. This translates as an average of \$250,000 less over their work lives to invest in retirement.
- Women over age 50 are more than twice as likely as men over 50 to frequently miss activities due to a lack of transportation.
- Older women face particular challenges in getting access to training and educational programs that enable them to increase their job skills. The AARP Foundation has a scholarship program for older women with low incomes. A third of the recipients are grandparents and almost half of the recipients were in dead-end jobs.
- Working women are often the sole or primary economic support for their families, yet they tend to be concentrated in low-paying occupations. More than two-thirds of the part-time workforce is made up of women, with less job security and little or no access to employer-provided benefits.
- The vast majority of family caregivers are women. Many are forced to drop out of the labor force altogether to take on family caregiving responsibilities.

Health care access, displaced homemakers, widowhood, credit issues, economic vulnerability, out-of-pocket health costs, retirement system disparities, Social Security disparities, spousal pension rights...the list goes on and on...all good reasons to have an Alaska Commission on the Status of Women.

AARP recommends an "AYE" vote on SB 53.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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CC: Vice-Chair Wes Keller
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