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Senator Bettye Davis Press Release

For Immediate Release: February 10th, 2012

‘Suicide in Alaska: Comparative Analysis and Prevention’ Presentation Set for Wednesday

JUNEAU-Senator Bettye Davis, D-Anchorage, is sponsoring a Lunch and Learn this upcoming Wednesday with a focus on Alaska’s high rate of suicide and what the Legislature can do to reduce those troubling figures. Hollie Henderson, who is a policy analyst with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), will make a presentation on how Alaska’s suicide rates compare with the rest of the nation. Ms. Henderson also plans to discuss current state laws and programs as well as legislation being considered right now.

Ms. Henderson is responsible for tracking state legislation related to injury and violence prevention, including trauma systems. She contributes to multiple publications for state legislators related to policies that aim to reduce injury and violence rates, and address health care costs. Laura Tobler, Health Program Director for NCSL, will also be joining Ms. Henderson for the presentation.

According to the State’s Department of Health, Alaska has the highest rate of suicide per capita in the country. The rate of suicide in the United States was 12.0 suicides per 100,000 people in 2009 (the most recent year available from the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control). In 2010, Alaska’s rate was 22.6 suicides per 100,000 people. Alaska had 1,389 suicides between 2001 and 2010 - an average of 139 deaths by suicide per year,”

“Suicide doesn’t just affect that one person. We’re talking about families, friends and whole communities who have to live with the devastating effects long after,” said Senator Davis. “We need to gather as much information as possible on why such a high number of Alaskans are taking their own lives. Then we need to take that information and figure out how to make these tragedies stop happening.”

Senator Davis is the sponsor of [Senate Bill 137](#), which would require mandatory youth suicide awareness and prevention training for certain teachers, administrators, counselors, and specialists employed in school districts across the state. The Senate Finance Committee passed SB137 on February 3rd. SB137 is now waiting to be scheduled for a vote by the full Senate.

WHAT: Lunch and Learn: “Suicide in Alaska: Comparative Analysis and Prevention”

WHERE: State Capitol Building, Butrovich and Fahrenkamp Rooms

WHEN: Wednesday, February 15th, 12 to 1pm

For more information, please contact Celeste Hodge in Senator Davis’ Office at (907) 465-3822.

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