

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE WES KELLER DISTRICT 7

SPONSOR STATEMENT HB 324

"An Act relating to the controlled substance prescription database."

Today, in Alaska as in America drug abuse no longer means merely illegal narcotics sold by the local dealer or pusher. Often it means the kind prescribed by an area medical professional and filled by a pharmacist. Misuse of pain killers, better known as opiates is reaching epidemic proportions and for many abusers are the Drug of Choice. They are also the leading source of overdose and narcotic related deaths.

Recently, the Federal Government recognized the need for better monitoring of this growing narcotic problem. Congress authorized funding for a database that would allow medical professionals to see if a patient is acquiring an excessive amount of a pain medication. As expected, that funding dried up in August of 2013. Alaska is currently funding the database through an inter-department agreement that probably cannot survive our tighter budgets.

House Bill 324 gives life to this key part of the program. It takes the process to an organized level by addressing the input at the point of distribution, the pharmacist. How the program will work will be up to the Board of Pharmacy. How it is paid for will also be up to the Board and the Department of Commerce and Economic Development.

While it may seem strange to be asking for a system to track Alaskan's prescription drug behavior, it has become a problem that cannot be ignored. HB 324 is a key part in curtailing the abuse of a new generation of drug abuse.