

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE PETE HIGGINS

SPONSOR STATEMENT

"An Act requiring the Alaska Public Offices Commission to maintain the confidentiality of certain proceedings, documents, and information."

Alaskans expect their elected officials to adhere to a strict set of laws and ethics codes, but, those same standards don't apply to all.

HB 235 would change that. It's unfortunate that the legislature did not include the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC) when it strengthened its ethics and disclosure laws in the past decade. If it had, we would not currently be in this hyper-politicized campaign era.

HB235 requires the Commission to maintain confidentiality of proceedings, documents, and information until the Commission establishes that a violation of Alaska Statutes has been determined. That is the same standard we as legislators are held to, the Executive Branch are held to, and ensures the process has been followed with no undue influence or unneeded rush to judgment.

The Commission performs a vital service to the people of the state. We recognize the need to have the findings open to the public, once the facts of the matter have been determined and there is a finding of a violation. This legislation does not detract from APOC's mission, duties, and responsibilities. The public will still be informed, and more importantly, have access to the record once the facts are known.

Unfortunately, this process has been misused by various entities on both sides of an issue, and even more so during the election cycle. These entities make allegations timed at influencing the election process and the often-times unfounded claims have real impacts to those involved. For all intents and practices, the APOC process has been high-jacked by these entities and the media influence that follows, turns the APOC into a campaign tool, which was never its intended purpose.

I urge your support on this timely and needed reform.

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