

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE WES KELLER DISTRICT 7

SPONSOR STATEMENT

HB 200

“An Act relating to the Alaska Judicial Council and to judicial retention elections.”

House Bill 200 is clarifying language on the public process involving the retention or removal comments on Alaska Judges. The Alaska Judicial Council provides information to the public about Judges, Magistrates, and Masters of the Court. The Council reviews information about these jurors and submits information to the Lieutenant Governor for inclusion in the election pamphlet. That information often goes beyond impartial and objective as it includes a recommendation to reject or retain a judge.

The question is, should a government agency be making such a recommendation or should they just provide the information received and investigated during the review process. House Bill 200 answers that question clearly by advising the Council not to include recommendation language.

The Alaska Judicial Council is a tool that gets information to the people. Alaskans who have limited or no interaction with the courts have little knowledge about the men and women sitting on the bench. Providing insight on the judicial members has become a goal for the Alaska Judicial Council. HB 200 does not change that.

HB 200 simply eliminates a recommendation to reject or retain a member of the Judiciary. It provides the facts to the public and lets them decide on their own.