

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



WORLD TRADE

RULES COMMITTEE

ADMIN REG REVIEW

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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SENATOR BERTA GARDNER

SENATE MINORITY LEADER

Sponsor Statement

SB24 - *"An Act relating to the applicability of the Legislative Ethics Act to legislative interns, legislative volunteers, consultants, independent contractors, sole proprietorships, and other legal entities."*

In 2014, through the routine advisory opinion process, the Legislative Ethics Administrator discovered that independent contractors and consultants were considered legislative employees in statute and subject to the ethics code. SB24 seeks to remedy the issue that arose from considering consultants and contractors as legislative employees.

In statute, anyone who has a contract with the legislature, or works as an independent consultant, must go through the full ethics training required for legislative employees, and they must follow the proper disclosures, candidate restrictions, gift requirements, etc. levied on members of the legislature and their staff.

Since the statute was written, in the late 1990's, independent contractors and consultants have not been filing said disclosures, attending trainings, or adhering to any part of the ethics code outside of their contract, which in no way suggest or implies they have been unethical in conduct.

Practically speaking, it's highly unlikely that the small ethics staff could realistically follow up on gift and financial disclosures for every contract and consultant to the legislature. Corporations often contract with the legislature as well, complicating the problem.

SB24 takes independent contractors and consultants out of the legislative employee definition and applies a certain suite of reasonable and practicable ethics requirements to them.

The Ethics Committee requests a fix to the problem through legislation and I ask for your support for this solution.