

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Session

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Finance Committee

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SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI

Sponsor Statement Senate Bill 180

An Act relating to the establishment and maintenance of an internet website providing information on state government financial transactions and specifying the information to be made available on the website

The state of Alaska spends billions of dollars each year on everything from office supplies, professional services and capital improvement projects. Public accountability helps ensure that state funds are spent wisely. All 50 states operate websites that make information on state expenditures and revenues accessible to the public. However, compared to other states Alaska's site is ranked as one of the worst in the nation at making the data accessible to the public.

The intent of the Alaska Online Checkbook Act is to create a free, searchable website that provides Alaskans with easy access to detailed and comprehensive information on state spending. This will encourage better understanding of state operations and, ultimately, help ensure that funding is directed to the state's most important needs. The state currently posts some financial information in a downloadable spreadsheet, but this spreadsheet is very cumbersome, must be downloaded, is difficult to search and understand. It does not provide any "big picture" context about state expenditures vs. revenues nor is it codified in law. The ability to see how Alaska's government uses public funding is fundamental to transparency and bolsters public confidence in government and promotes fiscal responsibility.

SB 180 will give Alaskans easy access to detailed information on state expenditures and revenue, empowering them to become fiscal watchdogs. It will lead to greater government accountability and a public better able to assist in making difficult government decisions.

I hope that you will join me in taking reasonable steps to ensure that Alaskans have access to our state's financial information.