

ALASKA STATE HOUSE

Session:

State Capitol Building, Room 112
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: (907) 465-4527
Email: rep.mike.cronk@akleg.gov



Interim:

MP 1314 Alaska Highway
P.O. Box 658
Tok, AK 99780
Phone: (907) 456-4527

REPRESENTATIVE MIKE CRONK

Sponsor Statement for House Bill 209

"An Act relating to emergency firefighters."

HB 209 authorizes the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources to hire emergency firefighter personnel using general fund appropriations.

By amending AS 41.15.030 (b), allowing the use of general funds to pay EFF personnel, they would be able to perform nonemergency work, such as hazardous fuels reduction, fuel break development, fire prevention, habitat restoration or improvement activities in fire-prone areas. In addition, this would provide economic opportunities for Alaskans, to enhance public safety, to empower rural Alaskans, to responsibly manage the state's natural resources, and to protect and save human lives.

Such nonemergency work could reduce the likelihood, intensity, and damage of wildland fires near populated areas and could bring significant reductions in the state's costs to fight future fires. Steady employment opportunities for mostly rural-based firefighting crews would strengthen local economies, family life, and enhance public safety. By employing EFF during non-emergency would provide training, fitness, and readiness for when a wildfire does occur. The number of EFF personnel that may be interested in applying for permanent DNR jobs would increase, which would help with recruitment.

Based on the legislative history, amending AS 41.15.030(b)'s last sentence does not appear to yield any constitutional or legal problems. In 1996, the legislature added the last sentence of AS 41.15.030(b) to address concerns about conflicts with AS 39.25.195 of the Alaska Personnel Act; specifically, that short term non-permanent employees would become full time employees. However, in 2000, the legislature amended AS 39.25.195 to allow for long term nonpermanent employees. Due to this amendment, the apparent concerns expressed by the legislature in 1996 warranting the inclusion of the last sentence to AS 41.15.030(b) no longer exists.

Staff Contact: Sue Stancliff 907-465-4527