

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 13, 2001

8:10 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative John Coghill, Chair
Representative Hugh Fate
Representative Gary Stevens
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Harry Crawford
Representative Joe Hayes

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Jeannette James

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 1

"An Act relating to the location of legislative sessions; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD AND HELD

PREVIOUS ACTION

BILL: HB 1

SHORT TITLE: MOVE LEGISLATURE TO ANCHORAGE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) ROKEBERG, GREEN

Jrn-Date	Jrn-Page	Action	
01/08/01	0023	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 12/29/00
01/08/01	0023	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/08/01	0023	(H)	STA, FIN
01/08/01	0023	(H)	REFERRED TO STATE AFFAIRS
02/13/01		(H)	STA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 102

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE JOE GREEN
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 403
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as co-sponsor of HB 1.

REPRESENTATIVE NORMAN ROKEBERG

Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 118
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as co-sponsor of HB 1.

REPRESENTATIVE BILL HUDSON

Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 502
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 1.

REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT OGAN

Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 108
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of HB 1.

SALLY SMITH, Mayor

City and Borough Of Juneau
155 South Seward Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 1.

REPRESENTATIVE BETH KERTTULA

Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 430
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 1.

WIN GRUENING, Chair

The Alaska Committee
P.O. Box 22138
Juneau, Alaska 99802-2138

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 1.

JEFF LOGAN, Staff

to Representative Green
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 403
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information in support of HB 1.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 01-11, SIDE A

Number 0015

CHAIRMAN JOHN COGHILL called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. Representatives Coghill, Fate, Stevens, Wilson, Crawford, and Hayes were present at the call to order.

HB 1 - MOVE LEGISLATURE TO ANCHORAGE

Number 0112

CHAIR COGHILL announced that the topic before the committee was HOUSE BILL NO. 1, "An Act relating to the location of legislative sessions; and providing for an effective date." He stated that it was his intention to hear HB 1 and begin discussion, but not to vote on passing the bill from committee before having another meeting, perhaps on a Saturday, to hear further testimony.

Number 0200

REPRESENTATIVE JOE GREEN, Alaska State Legislature, testified as co-sponsor [with Representative Rokeberg] of HB 1. He noted that the co-sponsors are "coming at this in slightly different ways but the same result, we hope." Representative Rokeberg will discuss problems with the building and with the ability to find lodging in Anchorage, while Representative Green's premise is that for the past eight years, the majority of his constituents have been suggesting strongly that the legislature should be convening in a place that is much more accessible to the majority of the people of the state," he said. "Although there are electronic ways to communicate and a couple of ways to get into the capital, there is a problem in connecting with the majority of our people. About 60 percent of the population lives within about a 50-mile radius and many of them commute to work [in Anchorage]."

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN told the committee it is time to reconsider where the legislature convenes. He noted that the legislature has been "on a roll for the last eight years" trying to reduce costs of state government. This [HB 1] certainly would reduce the commuting costs of 57 of our 60 legislators coming into Juneau; 60 percent of them wouldn't even have to move. Further, the location in Juneau discourages many good people, especially those with young families, from serving in the legislature. The result is not a good representation of a cross-section of the

people of the state. The pool from which we to select elected officials is diminished.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN said it is important that on any given day, people can easily go down to the capitol to testify in person or to see the legislators in action. He noted that school children who are the state's future leaders, could benefit from visiting.

Number 0738

REPRESENTATIVE NORMAN ROKEBERG, Alaska State Legislature, testified as co-sponsor of HB 1. The primary reason for introducing HB 1 is the issue of access for the people of the State of Alaska. He has lived in Alaska since 1946. The first time he entered the capitol was to be sworn in when he was 52 years old. He said that is indicative of what citizens believe is their inability to access to this particular building to talk to their representatives and participate in the policy-making activities.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG acknowledged that strides have been made in teleconferencing, but said, "We haven't even touched the technology in terms of videoconferencing and other things. He suggested that one of the problems is the lack of building capability and structure. The present capitol building was delivered in 1931 and he believes it is inappropriate and obsolete. The state has matured to a level [that justifies having] a legislative hall in which the people of the state can take pride and that also is a functional building. He testified that Room 17 and the House and Senate chambers are illegal because fire [escape] access is through them. The corridors and door systems are illegal and "not fixable unless we were to totally rework the building," he said. He alluded to another bill [HB 57] he is sponsoring, characterizing that approach as, "build it and they will come."

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG explained that his expertise includes three decades of marketing office space in the Anchorage area. It is only recently that the market there has tightened up, and he thinks space can still be obtained there that would serve on an interim basis until a legislative hall is built.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG addressed the fiscal notes, echoing Representative Green's statement that the legislature would achieve substantial savings [by moving to Anchorage] although the administration would incur substantial cost in meeting with

the legislature if [the administration] were to remain sited in Juneau. "That might be a wash [in terms of cost]," he said.

Number 1085

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG emphasized that the real issue is what he called "a private fiscal note," that individuals who want to travel to meet with their legislators incur substantial costs. There are some 35,000 people in Juneau and more than 635,000 people in the rest of the state.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG said the people of this state want a new capital location, and have voted to [move the capital] at least twice. He disagreed with the FRANK [Frustrated Responsible Alaskans Needing Knowledge] Initiative [AS 44.06.050-060], saying it is based on the false premise that the state would incur extraordinary costs in relocating the capital. He said, "I would be more than happy as a real estate developer, to build the state capitol building [and] all the other premises ... needed ... for the state capitol building for absolutely no cost to the state. You just give me the additional land around that capitol site and I'll make up the difference and make a profit."

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG then addressed the issue of so-called "reparations for the municipality of Juneau." He would be the first to admit that the community would be severely impacted, he said, but on the other hand:

I would call this the most anti-business environment I've ever seen in my life of any community in the United States of America, even to the point of federal white collar research jobs that pay very much and are in the area of environmental science have been repudiated in my understanding by this community. The community has also voted down any additional road access ... and also has put up barriers to even the extension of the north road so that the ferry run between this area and Haines could be reduced substantially, to say nothing of rejecting its historic roots ... [as a] community built mostly on old mine tailings.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG went on to say that people need to recognize that Alaska is basically a natural resource state, and:

This community has been the hotbed for, I think, the total destruction of the timber industry and the forestry industry in Southeast Alaska. I don't mean to pick on this community too much. I would say that the people [of] this town are some of the nicest folks I've ever met in my life ... and I think it is a very hospitable city. But I think they need to recognize eventually, the capitol of the state of Alaska is going to be moved.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG concluded by predicting that the people of Alaska "will take up the initiative process once again and speak to this issue."

Number 1385

CHAIR COGHILL asked Representative Rokeberg if he thinks moving the legislature would [make] any difference in access to some parts of the administration, perhaps creating "a greater disconnect in communication."

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG said he thinks there has already been a major division, as many state departments have "the vast majority of their employees" in the Anchorage area ... or throughout the state" [while] the core executive activities are maintained in Juneau.

CHAIR COGHILL anticipated that there will be discussion about the cost of real estate, and he referred to Representative Rokeberg's expertise in that area.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG noted that he had participated in discussions about what is now known as the Robert B. Atwood Building, in Anchorage. He helped develop that structure in the early 1980s and was responsible for marketing it for a number of years. He had advised the legislature that he thought it was an excellent bargain when they bought a \$50 million building for less than \$25 [million]. In doing so, they got \$5 million worth of additional land for nothing in downtown Anchorage that includes Block 80 of the original town site. He said he has always regarded that property as a choice piece of real estate in terms of potential development. He said there has been some discussion of using the Atwood Building as a legislative hall, and although that would be feasible, he would counsel against it.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG went on to say that HB 1 contemplates use of existing premises and office space that would be on the market. In recent years, there was a surplus of office space extending all the way back to the economic collapse in 1986. Now, people are "jockeying to build new premises in Anchorage," he said. He said there should be plenty of space available.

Number 1645

CHAIR COGHILL noted that in Fairbanks, "some of us have a little problem ... letting Anchorage have everything." On the other hand, they have to spend quite a bit to get to Juneau. If [the legislature] is moved, he is not sure he would want it moved to Anchorage. He asked Representative Rokeberg if he had done any polling or seen any other indication of what the people want.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG said [he thought the people of Mat-Su would understand] that relocating to Anchorage, even on an interim basis, would "break the barriers we might have on relocating out of Juneau." He said, quite frankly, that is one reason he introduced another bill he had mentioned earlier. That bill [HB 57] allows any municipality in Alaska with more than 30,000 residents to vie to build a state capitol building and lease it to the state government for the nominal consideration of \$1 a year. "It's like build it and they will come," he repeated. That would create competition ... and also reduce the expense. The state would pay for all operating costs, repairs, and maintenance, and then have a reversionary interest in the property after 30 years or whatever financing period was necessary to build it.

CHAIR COGHILL observed that people in Fairbanks might struggle with that parochial geographic problem.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG volunteered that his college senior thesis at Willamette University had been on Alaska's sectional politics in the late 1960s to 1971. "It's an ongoing thing that's been with Alaska since Day 1, since before the fish traps," he said.

REPRESENTATIVE STEVENS asked about the economic impacts on community and asked Representative Rokeberg to delineate some of those.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG acknowledged, "They [the economic impacts] would be clearly pretty severe. I think Juneau depends in large part on the legislature, particularly in their winter

season, which is their off-tourist season I think there would be dislocation. But frankly ... my sympathy ... is mollified to a large degree by the attitude ... I perceive." He said he had not done any analysis of the economic impacts, but recognizes that they would be substantial.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked about statistics that show where visitors go in Alaska. She said she assumes they come to Juneau because it's the capital, but thinks they also make their way up to Anchorage. She wondered if visitors would still come [to Juneau if it were not the capital.]

Number 1930

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG said he thinks that depends on how much Juneau charges as a head tax on cruise ship passengers. "That's just one more nail in the coffin in my opinion ... not to say that those tourists that visit this community shouldn't pay their fair share in the infrastructure costs." Responding to Representative Wilson, he said he does not have the numbers [regarding tourist destinations], but he knows they are readily available from the travel industry.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON commented, "It really does depend on where you live in the state how you feel about this. I used to live in Tok and I can remember at the time I thought it was ridiculous that I had to come to Juneau to ... [reach] my legislators and ... [see] what's going on. However, I live in the Southeast now, and it does change your perspective quite a bit and I think that the Southeast really is in economic trouble at this point in time and I think pulling the capital out would be devastating. I really think that would have a big effect on all of Southeast."

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON recalled living in North Carolina, where the population is dense and there are roads everywhere. She served in the legislature there, too, and was "totally amazed" to find that people in Alaska have more access to the capital than those in North Carolina, "despite all those roads." She said that because of teleconferencing, many Alaskans take part on a regular basis. "Our legislators are very, very accessible to the people in the state just because of the way we do conduct business here, and it's really quite remarkable and it is wonderful," she said.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG said due to the debate over the timber industry in the last few years, "I think there's a lot of people

in Southeastern and people in Ketchikan particularly [who] are not as fond of this community any more," he said. "They view it (and I think probably wrongly) as the hotbed of environmentalism and the reason that the timber industry has ... almost gone out of business here. And so I think that [some of] the support that Juneau shared for many years in the old battle of coalitions [of anti-Anchorage elements] has been lost." He asked Representative Wilson if when she lived in Tok, she ever came to the state capital.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON replied, "Yes, I did."

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG asked how much it cost her.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON said she could not remember, adding that she was in Juneau for a month one summer while her husband was in school there.

Number 2155

REPRESENTATIVE FATE asked Representative Rokeberg if he had considered a "piggyback phenomenon," whereby even though [only] the legislative session is moved, other administrative offices would be forced to move in the future. "Do you envision that there would be more and more curtailing of the activities in Juneau as far as state government is concerned?" he asked. It was his understanding that HB 1 does not propose a total capital move, but only a session move.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG said he would characterize the move as evolutionary. He said Representative Fate's analysis is probably correct, that there would be "kind of a leakage toward the legislative activity by the executive." He reiterated that many commissioners now live in Anchorage and travel a lot to Juneau. Representative Rokeberg then referred to a \$2 million fiscal note on HB 1 from the administration related to "running people back and forth," and said it ... doesn't make sense to him.

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES referred to the three fiscal notes, and asked which one the committee should be looking at.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG replied, "Add 'em up."

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES said he has a big problem with what [HB 1] is going to cost, a great deal of money when one adds up all three fiscal notes. He stated:

On top of it, we don't have a long-term fiscal plan, and this is a minute issue compared to the other issues facing our state at this moment. When I went through talking to my constituents, no one said moving the session from Juneau to Anchorage or wherever was a hot-button issue. I guarantee you [that] safety [and] education, were ... paramount issues. Moving the capital was not. Moving the session was not. I had no one tell me that they had a major argument with the way that we do business currently. I think that you'll have folks looking at this as a "power grab" from Anchorage and hurting Southeast, and I don't see what the true benefit of this is other than to increase the prosperity of the Municipality of Anchorage.

Number 2327

CHAIR COGHILL said that might be characteristic of some of the division [of opinion] in Fairbanks. He added that if the capital were closer to the people, more people might be involved in building that [economic] plan.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG said he tended to agree with Chair Coghill and Representative Hayes about the priority of the issues for the state. "I don't think this [moving the legislature] is on the very top of the list," he said. "However, given the age of this building and the issues coming forward, we are going to have to confront this sooner rather than later ... because we are going to need a new facility. Frankly, the life support systems of this building are failing. There's no sprinkler system.... This building by any stretch of the imagination doesn't meet fire code"

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG emphasized that the people of Southcentral Alaska "overwhelmingly" would like to see the capital closer to them. There's a huge difference between [participating in] a teleconference and being able to talk to somebody face to face. There's "a huge disconnect," he said. The people of Anchorage participate in their government to a very limited degree. It's only the people that have an interest that do participate.

CHAIR COGHILL recalled how frustrating it was to him when as a private citizen, he would take time from work to go to a teleconference, and be "out of sight and out of mind." He noted

that it takes constant vigilance to make sure people participating from remote locations are not squeezed out by those present and are heard properly.

CHAIR COGHILL then returned to the issue of access. He said Anchorage is not as accessible as he would like "as a country boy from Nenana," and that finding a parking space in Anchorage can be difficult.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG replied, "Worse than Juneau?" He said he was late this morning because somebody parked in back of him and he couldn't get his car out.

CHAIR COGHILL brought up the possibility of people playing "hide and seek." When a person comes to Juneau to see a legislator, that legislator will be in the capitol building. In Anchorage, he said, legislators would be more likely to escape from the building and go into other parts of town.

CHAIR COGHILL also noted that access to committees is important, and if he could drive to a building and get into a committee meeting, would more likely do that than to go to a teleconference.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG agreed, adding, "That is another one of the problems with this structure. There is no public parking. There's no public lounge. You can get a cup of coffee and that's about all. This building is not consumer- or public-friendly. The poor press is in this little room down there in the end of a hallway ... next to Room 17."

Number 2642

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN emphasized that he is not trying to move the capital, but to move the legislative session closer to the people, and that if [the capitol building] were road accessible, it would make a major difference. He then pointed out that the power goes with the number of votes you have, and there are more votes coming from Anchorage than there are from any other community in the state. So wherever the legislature meets, Anchorage is going to have the power. He also said it shouldn't be forgotten that the capital originally had been in Sitka and that moving it to Juneau had not decimated Sitka. "Juneau is a beautiful and quaint town and tourists do not [come] here to see the capital," he said.

REPRESENTATIVE STEVENS noted for the historic record that before the capital was in Sitka, it was in Kodiak.

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES referred to previous remarks about the quality of legislators. He said one of the things he has noticed in the House is that its membership is diverse, with ages ranging from the 20s up to 70. He said those people are making choices about whether they can make the commitment to [serve], and he doesn't think that has much to do with where the capital is.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN took exception, noting that Senator Sean Parnell left the legislature because he has two young daughters of school age. He said he could provide a list of people who have young families and who won't run for the legislature for the next 10 years because it would disrupt their families.

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES replied that he thinks that has less to do with family than it has to do with salary. Again, he said, that's the kind of choice a person has to make when deciding whether to run for office.

CHAIR COGHILL said having raised a family, he can understand who some people would not want to leave their families to come down here [to Juneau].

TAPE 01-11, SIDE B
Number 2915

REPRESENTATIVE BILL HUDSON, Alaska State Legislature, came forward to testify. He separated himself "from the comments of Representative Rokeberg when he tries to assign the will and the feelings of the people of Juneau as relates to economics."

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON then pointed out "that all of us who are in this body ... have a responsibility to look after the holistic health of the whole state." Each legislator needs to look at what is good for the other districts as well as for the 12,000 people that legislator represents. "Juneau has everything to lose in this particular instance and has every year that I've been in the legislature. This is perhaps the most divisive and difficult issue that a representative from Juneau will have to deal with because it is ... a back-breaker. This is not just moving the session to Anchorage.... This will be a de facto capital move...."

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON reminded the committee that the legislatures principal contacts during the session are with the administration, "because we're sitting here developing a \$7 billion budget that the governor and all of his commissioners and all of the "hands and feet of government" have to live with." He continued:

The fact that we're here and the governor is here [facilitates] that interaction between the administrative and the legislative sides of government. If we move the legislature to Anchorage, the governor and all of these commissioners are going to be up there as well, and they're going to be on per diem. Instead of having 57 legislators sitting in rented rooms, you would have most of the centralized arm of government sitting in motel rooms in Anchorage waiting until they are called. And for those four months the legislature is convened in Anchorage, they would be all be away from their primary responsibilities.

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON recalled that when he was commissioner of administration, he was responsible for 15 to 17 divisions of government. He testified:

When I left my office and walked across the street and stayed here for an hour or two and interacted with the legislative committees, I then went back over and took up my work. If the legislature is up in Anchorage and I'm sitting in Juneau, I've got to go up there with the directors and fiscal people and the other specialists I need to back up my position. Most of them are here because the governor is here. If you move the legislature to Anchorage, you will in effect be moving the capital to Anchorage.

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON reminded proponents of HB 1 that moving the capital is not a new idea, and that a procedure has been established:

First of all you have to get a vote of the public that you want to move the capital. Then, ... all bondable costs [for the next 12 years] of moving the capital or the legislature ... have to be prepared and presented to the public for a vote. That is required by the FRANK Initiative ... that was passed resoundingly by the people of Alaska not once but twice.

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON agreed with to some of Representative Rokeberg's concerns, including [the need for more] parking and for modifications to the capitol building. He suggested that if the governor were to consent to move to the State Office Building, the legislature could take over and modify the entire third floor of the capitol building. It also would be possible to construct three new floors behind the capitol building for very little money. Work is in progress with the city on developing better parking, and there are "ways in which we could triple the parking ... within a stone's throw of the capitol." He thinks all of those things are very important.

Number 2556

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON emphasized that the capital in Juneau is an anchor or linchpin for Southeast Alaska. The region has been hit very hard by recent closures in the Tongass National Forest, the diminishment of the timber that is available, the sawmills that have closed down, the pulp mills that have closed down, the impact on fishing of the farmed salmon coming from Chile and Norway. The economic health of the region is a very important consideration. He went on to counter the assertion that Juneau has not been attracting new businesses in recent years, noting the dramatic increase in the number of tourists and cruise ships, and the opening of the Greens Creek Mine, which employs 400-500 people and affects twice that many people [involved in related work].

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON said in his opinion, discussion] needs to focus primarily on [addressing] the inefficiencies of the capitol building rather than on moving the whole capital. The fiscal implications of moving even just the session, "at a time when we are \$530 million in arrears [and] have no long-term fiscal plan -- I just think that it's the wrong way to go."

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON referred to Representative Green's assertion that the capital's location deterred people from running for public office. He observed that he had seen very few uncontested races. He noted that the legislature holds interim hearings, and that legislators who do not live in Juneau have eight months a year [when the legislature is not in session] and can have an office in their home town right in the middle of their 10,000-12,000 constituents and can draw per diem for just going down and spending four hours a day interacting with those constituents. There can be interim hearings, and he would support the leadership of the House and the Senate taking

action to hold hearings in Anchorage and Fairbanks and even in the villages of Alaska.

Number 2397

CHAIR COGHILL noted that another bill that referred to the committee deals with having committee authority outside of regular session times, and that other bills are going to be before the legislature dealing with limiting the length of the session and different building issues. He said his commitment in [foster] discussion of any of the problems and issues and then to look for solutions to some of those problems.

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON wished to put on the record that the FRANK Initiative [passed in 1994] requires that before the state can spend money to move the capital or the legislature, the voters must know the total cost and approve a bond issue for all bondable costs of the move for the 12-year period after approval. A commission would determine both bondable and total costs of the move including moving personnel, offices, and social, economic, [and] environmental costs to the present and the new sites. It would also include costs to plan, build, furnish, use, and finance facilities at least equal to those provided by the present capital. Representative Hudson pointed out that 159,000 Alaska voters, 77 percent, voted in favor of the FRANK Initiative on November 8, 1994. He said, "This is the last spoken word of the majority of the people of Alaska, and I think ... if people want to move the capital, this is what they have to do. They have to convince the people of Alaska that it is the right thing to do and then they have to [put it up to a] public vote."

CHAIR COGHILL said he also understands that an act of the legislature could affect the FRANK Initiative.

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON said he was not completely certain [about that].

CHAIR COGHILL said he, too, would have to find out for certain.

REPRESENTATIVE HUDSON noted that there have been many initiatives to move the capital, and that has been an issue since the 1960s. There's no other state that holds its session in [another city than] the capital, he emphasizes, and there is a provision in the [Alaska] constitution that says the capital of Alaska is in Juneau.

REPRESENTATIVE OGAN said he thinks one reason to move the legislative session at least part of the time is what he called, "grocery store politics." When legislators are back in their districts in the interim between sessions, "It's off people's radar screens," he said. [During session,] when the media are putting the issues of the day before the people on a regular basis and he goes home to his district, people stop him in the grocery store. "I think it's important that your constituents look you in the eye during session and figure out if you're lying or not," he declared.

REPRESENTATIVE OGAN recalled the end of the session when legislators passed a Permanent Fund tax out of the House without a vote of the people. Jerry Sanders stood up and said, "This could only happen after 180 days of isolation in Juneau."

REPRESENTATIVE OGAN said he thinks that sums it all up. "I think there's something in the water here or something in the building here that makes people's behavior just get kind of a little off kilter. A lot of it's the influence of and the access the administration has, the lack of access that regular people, ordinary people from all walks of life that can't come here because they can't afford to. I think it makes a difference."

REPRESENTATIVE OGAN then commented on the point of that had been made about commissioners having to go up north. He said he thinks the legislature now hears a lot testimony from division directors based in Anchorage who come down here [to Juneau] to give their presentations during budget time, so he would suspect [the cost of] that would probably be a wash.

Number 1979

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES asked Representative Ogan how often he goes home to his district, which he thinks is one of the important functions of a legislator. He recalled that during the Permanent Fund controversy, there had been many opportunities for folks to comment, and that the office where he was working as an aide received quite a few comments.

REPRESENTATIVE OGAN said he goes home to his district and has town meetings about once a month. About 30-40 people come every time, and many of those are "regulars." But he finds that people who won't come to a town meeting, call, or e-mail will "sure stop you in the grocery store and they'll let you know what they think You're public property."

CHAIR COGHILL commented that from either side of the issue, the fact that legislators want to assure the best access is heartening, and one of the things the committee is going to be discussing is how to keep that access as clear as possible.

Number 1854

SALLY SMITH, Mayor, City and Borough of Juneau, acknowledged that it is hard to represent a community and listen to it be disparaged. She recognized that [the disparagement] was not meant to be personal.

MAYOR SMITH noted that she had spent three terms in the Alaska Legislature representing Fairbanks, and said she had looked forward to the drive to Juneau and the trip on the Marine Highway System. "Southeast does have a highway system; it's the Marine Highway System," she stressed. "We may not have all the vessels we need, but we've got the roadway."

MAYOR SMITH continued:

During the interim was the time when I got close to my constituency and I learned what they wanted and the issues that were going to be important. Those issues don't change when you come to Juneau. They may get refined a bit, but that's where the teleconference system comes in, and I'm proud to have been on of the pioneers of the teleconferencing system. I believe that Juneau is accessible for the needs of the capital, and I'm also proud of this community, which is my now adopted home, because of the things it has done to make it a capital city. We have been the capital for 101 years. We've had this building for ... 70 years. That's a long heritage. There is a campus here ... that includes the administration and ... the judicial branch as well.

I could go on and reinforce some of the speakers who have spoken up in favor of Juneau, but I want more importantly to say that our assembly last night [appropriated] \$150,000 [for] planning to improve the footprint of this building. Representative Hudson mentioned the [addition] that could be put in. We can also look at crossing Fifth Street over to the Terry Miller Building. That would perhaps provide ample space.

But as I bring this up, I also want to suggest that any condition that this building is in falls solely on the shoulders of the Legislative Council. Juneau does not own the building. But we are here to make it as hospitable as we possibly can. Again, I'm really proud of our community and I'm proud of what to we do to make legislators welcome. I was on the receiving end of that for six years. Now I'm on the giving end, and I'm happy to have you here....

Number 1688

CHAIR COGHILL concurred that the community had made a strong effort to welcome the legislature.

REPRESENTATIVE STEVENS asked Mayor Smith to go into more detail about the \$150,000. "That's city funds that they are going to invest into looking at how to improve the state-owned building here ... and hiring architects?"

MAYOR SMITH explained that the city is allocating the money to the Alaska Committee ...[to have] an architect draw up potential plans. "We want to cooperate with you in that direction," she emphasized.

REPRESENTATIVE STEVENS said he was very pleased to see Juneau step up and take part in this.

CHAIR COGHILL said it also should be mentioned that [Juneau] has been involved in providing Gavel-to-Gavel television coverage of the legislature. That is a big help, although access still is an issue. He added that the House State Affairs Standing Committee room is going to be used for a demonstration of closed captioning [for Gavel-to-Gavel coverage] that Juneau is going to present February 22. People who have certain impairments are going to be brought into the discussion, and he thought that was another important part of the access issue.

MAYOR SMITH mentioned that she had seen a demonstration of video streaming with closed captioning last week, and that it is very exciting.

CHAIR COGHILL said that it is another worthwhile effort that is being made to improve access. He added, "But if you're coming from Kotzebue or Wainwright, it takes two days to get here [to Juneau], and that is part of the issue, too."

MAYOR SMITH stated:

Anchorage is a marvelous city, but Anchorage is not typical of Alaska or of the problems that Alaska faces. I believe that when we get out of the city and we see another region, we then begin to understand that we're part of a bigger picture, we're part of a larger fabric. If we stay where the majority are, we don't get that broadening and we see Alaska through distorted eyes.

Number 1461

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES asked who owns the capitol building.

MAYOR SMITH said she believes the state does.

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES asked if the legislature could appropriate funds to bring the building up to code.

MAYOR SMITH said the legislature could do so.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON expressed appreciation for Mayor Smith's ability to speak to both sides of the issue [as a legislator coming from Fairbanks and as a resident of Juneau].

REPRESENTATIVE FATE asked about an earlier reference to a road from Juneau, and asked if that is still being considered.

MAYOR SMITH said an opinion poll had been taken of Juneau voters. The question was, "Do you prefer a road or enhanced ferry service?" The difference in votes was about 100 more in favor of enhanced ferry service. She said her perspective is that there is a whole series of communities in Southeast that would benefit from improved ferry service, whereas a road would serve only Juneau, Skagway, and Haines. "Where funds are limited, it seems prudent to serve the greater good," she said. "Enhanced ferry service would improve it for all of you, too, when you come down in the winter," she added

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA introduced herself as the representative from downtown Juneau. She said she has a unique perspective on the issue because she was raised as a legislative child, every year moving back and forth between Palmer and Juneau. She recalled family jokes about living out of boxes, and (despite her mother's efforts) playing in the capitol building. She said

she felt very fortunate to have grown up getting to know some of the great leaders of the state, living in the capital and then going home to the Matanuska Valley and watching her father in his political activities there. "I also know from growing up as a legislative child what a huge sacrifice it is to serve, and I'm finding that out every day as I [am] serving myself".

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA pointed out that legislators need to look at what they themselves need to do ... "so that we can keep our families with us, so that we can travel back appropriately to our districts, because the bottom line is, no matter where we are in the state, some families, some people, will not be at home." That raises the issue of legislative salary and about better travel budgets. Some of the problem is exactly that, she said, and no matter where we are, that will be an issue.

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA emphasized that "the real issue is access: How do our constituents, no matter where they are in the state, feel close to us? How do we give them ... the "grocery store" factor, no matter where we are?" She thinks television and closed captioning are pieces of the answer. She noted that now one can log onto the computer and listen to a hearing.

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA pointed out that, "No matter where we are in the state, someone is not going to be able to visit us." Rural Alaska will not be able to drive and many people will not be able to fly [to the session], no matter where it is, She asked the committee to think carefully about HB 1 and what it means to the state as a whole. "I think all of you realize we are one state, we are one people, and it doesn't make a lot of sense to focus on moving a locality when what we really need to do is continue to improve our access," she said.

CHAIR COGHILL remarked that the discussion is a good one because it is bringing up many other [associated] issues, including some he would like to address.

Number 0982

WIN GRUENING, Chair, The Alaska Committee, explained that The Alaska Committee is is a 21-member group representing a "pretty good cross-section of the community." The volunteer group has been working since 1994 to make the capital more accessible to all Alaskans and to make the capital city and the capitol building better places. He distributed a card with information on the committee's efforts, including constituent airfares that the committee worked out with Alaska Airlines, Gavel to Gavel

television coverage, and the Global Positioning System (GPS) approach to the Juneau International Airport that has "dramatically improved" access.

MR. GRUENING described "streaming" Gavel-to-Gavel coverage to the Internet. Currently, it is possible to hear some committee hearings, but what they are talking about doing and have recently have demonstrated is technology that allows simultaneous coverage of live events on the Internet including the regular Gavel to Gavel coverage plus audio of several committee hearings. Constituents would be able to hear events going on in several places at the same time. All of that can be archived and played back later. Video streaming also overcomes the need for cable as a connection. He said it should be available during this session or the next.

MR. GRUENING said the Alaska Committee feels the [condition of the capitol] building is an important issue not just to legislators, but also to the public. He mentioned crowded committee hearings, limited gallery space, and the scarcity of parking. Current legislation [several bills] proposes to build a new building, but there are more cost-effective solutions. Mayor Smith mentioned the committee's cooperative effort with the City and Borough of Juneau to work with the legislature in developing some proposals for building improvement. Money is available to contract with architects to work with the legislature. He asked for cooperation from the legislators, saying he assumes their goals are the same, to improve the facilities and access as well.

MR. GRUENING said the Alaska Committee does not think there is political support for constructing a brand-new building either in Juneau or anywhere else in the state. "In fact, our polling suggests ... that most people feel that building a new building or moving the legislature is ... a de facto capital move," he said. "I would respectfully suggest that even though we have a fiscal note, that that fiscal note should ... disclose all the costs of moving the capital, not just the legislature." He concluded by assuring legislators that the Alaska Committee stands ready to assist them in improving the facilities, in improving access, or in any other ways they feel are important to carrying out their business.

Number 0440

CHAIR COGHILL expressed appreciation for the work the Alaska committee has done and for actually putting "feet to it" with

money. He noted that issues rising to the surface include the cost of moving the capital and the cost of moving people to the capital to visit, lobby, or see their legislators -- costs that are never fully expressed in the fiscal note.

MR. GRUENING said the Alaska Committee views the cost of getting to the capital as an access issue. That is why they work on issues like the constituent fare, road access, and enhanced ferry service. It is costly not only to get to Juneau, but also to get out of Juneau.

REPRESENTATIVE STEVENS asked about the timeline for the \$150,000 study.

MR. GRUENING said the Alaska Committee would like to start working with the legislature before the end of the current session. That would mean leadership identifying some people within the legislature to help determine what the legislature needs. Part of the study will inventory and evaluate current facilities, but the intent is to move beyond that and determine what the legislature's requirements actually are. He envisions working on the study through the current calendar year and presenting a draft product early next session.

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES asked if the Alaska Committee would share the polling information to which he had referred.

MR. GRUENING volunteered results of the 1998 poll and information from a new poll being taken this summer.

CHAIR COGHILL said he would like to provide that to all committee members.

Number 0069

JEFF LOGAN, Staff to Representative Green, Alaska State Legislature, assured the committee that the reasons behind the introduction of HB 1 "are sound and true, and that every time we have done a constituent survey, knocking on doors, when this question is included, percentages ... upwards of 70 percent of [Representative Green's} constituents indicate that it is something they would like to see happen."

TAPE 01-12, SIDE A
Number 0001

JEFF LOGAN continued his testimony, noting that although it may not be a top state issue, it is certainly an important issue in Representative Green's district.

MR. LOGAN indicated that he would like to fill in some gaps in the testimony. He began by referring to the fiscal note that states a potential cost of office space in Anchorage at the rate of \$2.25 per square foot. He noted that the legislature currently rents office space in Anchorage at \$1.39 per square foot. Regarding constituent [airline] fares, he quoted a news article saying that the city [of Juneau] contributed \$27,000 to publicize the fares. He noted that the discount is available only to members of the Alaska Airlines mileage plan. Regarding the executive branch moving north, he quoted another newspaper article reporting that another state commissioner had moved from Juneau to Anchorage, and that six of 14 commissioners now live primarily in Anchorage. "During the interim when we work outside the district, we certainly see an increasing number of key departments and key functions being performed in Anchorage already," he said. "The notion that there will be a bunch of commissioners sitting in hotel rooms in Anchorage instead of legislators isn't quite the way we see it."

MR. LOGAN referred to testimony about video and audio streaming over the Internet "and maybe over the legislature's system." The technology is available, but it is very expensive. The Information Technology Group, the division of the Department of Administration that handles telecommunications and information technology, has put out a Request for Proposals to privatize some of those services. If that happens, it is likely that the cost to the legislature for some of these services could increase dramatically. It is important to balance out the cost of some of these technologies and ... there may come a point when it does make sense ... to simply move our proceedings north. He concluded, "What we hear in Anchorage is that it will be an issue until it happens...."

Number 0464

REPRESENTATIVE CRAWFORD noted that he was the other Anchorage representative on the committee [along with Representative Hayes]. He said had heard a lot of interesting arguments this morning about why the legislature should or shouldn't move the capital. Most of his constituents "would like to have the legislature in Anchorage, but it's not anywhere near the top issue," he said. "That's not what people sent me down here to do. They sent me down here to get a long-term fiscal plan."

They sent me down here to deal with education issues [and] a number of other things. This one seems to be way down the list, and it's hard for me to understand why we're spending time every session on moving the capital when we've got so many other more pressing issues."

CHAIR COGHILL cited an analogy to raising children: "If they're hungry, that's an immediate issue, it's important. But disciplining them and clothing them properly and giving a long-range structural thing is important, too. So important and immediate ... have to go hand in hand, and I think part of this discussion is [about what is] structurally important to Alaska. Access to government and the place of population, how we can access our policy makers ... is an important issue [although] it may not be an immediate issue." He noted that time remaining for the meeting was short, and that he did not intend to close public testimony, but to continue it.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG agreed with Representative Crawford's prioritization of issues. He reminded the committee that the state constitution provides for three branches of government: the executive, the court system, and the legislature. The court system has done a wonderful job of capital expenditures and getting new additions, including a new courthouse in Anchorage. The administration in the Anchorage area is housed primarily in the Atwood building. It's important that the legislature be in a functional, accessible, friendly, and safe [facility] just as the administration and the courts are. When [the state government] has a depreciated asset that's not doing its job, that is an issue that needs to be addressed. He said he thinks the vast majority of people in the state ... recognize that, and that's why it's been an issue for the 40 years since statehood." The issue is one of those that are near and dear to his heart. Another is that of interim committee hearings. "We can have interim hearings now but we can't take substantive action in those," he explained

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG said things like a shorter session, interim hearings, and even a biennial budget could help with some of the problems of access and recruitment if the legislature remains in Juneau. "If we can shorten the session and make it more efficient and less costly, and also carry out interim activities that are more accessible to the public and have hearings around the state, I think those are positive steps in overcoming and ameliorating some of those problems that we have," he said.

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG continued:

I do appreciate the point the mayor made about people being statesmanlike, holistic, and looking at the entire state when you make decisions. I think each one of us, as a legislator, is first and foremost responsible to our own constituency and district, but also I agree with that theory. We have to look at the whole state. And I think that this particular issue is a matter of concern for the whole state. Clearly, major economic impacts on the City of Juneau should be considered, make sure that they are part of the equation

REPRESENTATIVE ROKEBERG said he is very pleased to hear about the activities of the Alaska Committee and the appropriation of funds from the City and Borough of Juneau. "Those are positive steps, and I think that perhaps in a very small way, maybe we've helped keep the fire lit and ... this issue before the public. It is something that is very important."

He concluded:

This may be my last term in the legislature -- and I emphasize "may" -- in large part because of the access issue ... and hardships it leaves on family life....After this number of years, it becomes very telling. And I think that the comments that Representative Ogan made regarding how we finish our sessions ... how there's an anxiousness to leave this community and get back home, that puts a lot of pressure on people. Some people think theoretically that's a good thing in terms of our decision-making process. I don't agree with that. I think that we should make the best decisions in the best time when the time is right and not necessarily to meet that deadline.

Number 1172

CHAIR COGHILL said it is an interesting discussion, he is grateful for the Juneau community coming forward and sharing with us what their intentions are, trying to make access and work a little easier for the legislature. He thinks how to get people involved in government is going to be part of the discussion. Geography definitely has a part to play in it because the vast majority of the population of Alaska is

somewhere in the central part of the state. He said he would like to see the legislature moved, but that he also is open to discussion. He plans to continue hearings on the issue and wants get other communities involved in the discussion. [HB 1 was held over.]

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR COGHILL adjourned the meeting of the House State Affairs Standing Committee at 10:00 a.m.