

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 1, 2004  
8:05 a.m.

**TAPE(S) 04-12**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Ralph Seekins, Chair  
Senator Scott Ogan, Vice Chair  
Senator Gene Therriault  
Senator Johnny Ellis

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Hollis French

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 288

"An Act relating to certain determinations concerning placement of a child in emergency custody and temporary placement hearings in child-in-need-of-aid proceedings; and providing for an effective date."

MOVED CSSB 288(JUD) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 307

"An Act relating to the amount of the bond required to stay execution of a judgment in civil litigation involving a signatory, a successor of a signatory, or an affiliate of a signatory to the tobacco product Master Settlement Agreement during an appeal; amending Rules 204 and 205, Alaska Rules of Appellate Procedure; and providing for an effective date."

MOVED CSSB 307(JUD) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 31

"An Act relating to initiative and referendum petitions; and providing for an effective date."

HEARD AND HELD

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to initiative and referendum petitions.

HEARD AND HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 288

SHORT TITLE: EMERGENCY CHILD CUSTODY PLACEMENT

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) GREEN

02/02/04 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/02/04 (S) HES, JUD  
02/09/04 (S) HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
02/09/04 (S) Moved CSSB 288(HES) Out of Committee  
02/09/04 (S) MINUTE(HES)  
02/11/04 (S) HES RPT CS 3DP SAME TITLE  
02/11/04 (S) DP: DYSON, GREEN, WILKEN  
02/11/04 (S) FIN REFERRAL ADDED AFTER JUD  
02/18/04 (S) JUD AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205  
02/18/04 (S) Heard & Held  
02/18/04 (S) MINUTE(JUD)  
02/23/04 (S) JUD AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205  
02/23/04 (S) -- Meeting Canceled --  
03/01/04 (S) JUD AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: HB 31

SHORT TITLE: INITIATIVE/REFERENDUM PETITIONS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) WILLIAMS

01/21/03 (H) PREFILE RELEASED (1/10/03)  
01/21/03 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/21/03 (H) STA, JUD  
03/04/03 (H) STA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 102  
03/04/03 (H) Heard & Held  
03/04/03 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
03/25/03 (H) STA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 102  
03/25/03 (H) Moved Out of Committee  
03/25/03 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
03/31/03 (H) STA RPT 2DP 4NR  
03/31/03 (H) DP: HOLM, WEYHRAUCH; NR: SEATON,  
03/31/03 (H) GRUENBERG, LYNN, DAHLSTROM  
04/04/03 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120  
04/04/03 (H) Heard & Held  
04/04/03 (H) MINUTE(JUD)  
04/23/03 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120  
04/23/03 (H) Moved Out of Committee  
04/23/03 (H) MINUTE(JUD)  
04/24/03 (H) JUD RPT 4DP 1DNP 1NR

04/24/03 (H) DP: SAMUELS, OGG, ANDERSON, MCGUIRE;  
 04/24/03 (H) DNP: GARA; NR: HOLM  
 02/05/04 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
 02/05/04 (H) VERSION: HB 31  
 02/06/04 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 02/06/04 (S) JUD, FIN  
 02/20/04 (S) JUD AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205  
 02/20/04 (S) Scheduled But Not Heard  
 02/23/04 (S) JUD AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205  
 02/23/04 (S) -- Meeting Canceled --  
 03/01/04 (S) JUD AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: HJR 5

SHORT TITLE: CONST AM: INITIATIVE/REFERENDUM PETITIONS  
 SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) WILLIAMS

01/21/03 (H) PREFILE RELEASED (1/10/03)  
 01/21/03 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 01/21/03 (H) STA, JUD, FIN  
 03/04/03 (H) STA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 102  
 03/04/03 (H) Heard & Held  
 03/04/03 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
 03/25/03 (H) STA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 102  
 03/25/03 (H) Moved Out of Committee  
 03/25/03 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
 03/31/03 (H) STA RPT 1DP 5NR  
 03/31/03 (H) DP: HOLM; NR: SEATON, GRUENBERG, LYNN,  
 03/31/03 (H) DAHLSTROM, WEYHRAUCH  
 04/04/03 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120  
 04/04/03 (H) Heard & Held  
 04/04/03 (H) MINUTE(JUD)  
 04/23/03 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120  
 04/23/03 (H) Moved Out of Committee  
 04/23/03 (H) MINUTE(JUD)  
 04/24/03 (H) JUD RPT 4DP 1DNP 1NR  
 04/24/03 (H) DP: SAMUELS, OGG, ANDERSON, MCGUIRE;  
 04/24/03 (H) DNP: GARA; NR: HOLM  
 04/30/03 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM HOUSE FINANCE 519  
 04/30/03 (H) Moved Out of Committee  
 04/30/03 (H) MINUTE(FIN)  
 05/01/03 (H) FIN RPT 4DP 2DNP 1NR 1AM  
 05/01/03 (H) DP: MEYER, FOSTER, HARRIS, WILLIAMS;  
 05/01/03 (H) DNP: STOLTZE, CROFT; NR: HAWKER;  
 05/01/03 (H) AM: CHENAULT  
 02/05/04 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
 02/05/04 (H) VERSION: HJR 5  
 02/06/04 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

02/06/04 (S) JUD, FIN  
02/23/04 (S) JUD AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205  
02/23/04 (S) -- Meeting Canceled --  
03/01/04 (S) JUD AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

Ms. Jacqueline Tupou  
Staff to Senator Green  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions about SB 288

Ms. Jean Mischel  
Legislative Legal and Research Services  
Legislative Affairs Agency  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions about SB 288

Mr. Tim Barry  
Staff to Representative Williams  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 31 and HJR 5 for the prime sponsor

Mr. Myrl Thompson  
Wasilla, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Opposed to HB 31 and HJR 5

Mr. Roger Gay  
Big Lake, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Opposed to HB 31 and HJR 5

Ms. Cheryl Jebe, President  
League of Women Voters of Alaska  
Juneau, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supports HB 31 and HJR 5

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

**TAPE 04-12, SIDE A**

**CHAIR RALPH SEEKINS** called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Senators Ogan, Ellis and Chair Seekins were present. Senator Therriault arrived shortly

thereafter. The first order of business to come before the committee was SB 288.

^#SB288

**SB 288-EMERGENCY CHILD CUSTODY PLACEMENT**

CHAIR SEEKINS informed members that a proposed committee substitute, labeled version U, was prepared for the committee.

SENATOR OGAN moved to adopt version U as the working document before the committee and then objected for the purpose of an explanation.

MS. JACQUELINE TUPOU, staff to Senator Lyda Green, sponsor of the measure, explained that the changes made to version U are technical in nature and were made by the legal drafter and attorneys from the Department of Law to improve the legislation. The first change replaced "emergency" custody with "temporary legal" custody on page 1, line 14. The second change is the addition of a new sentence beginning on page 2, line 4, which clarifies the court procedure.

SENATOR OGAN removed his objection; therefore version U was before the committee. He then asked what problem this legislation addresses.

MS. TUPOU told members that this legislation changes Alaska's statutory language to align with federal language. Currently, judges use different terminology when determining the placement of children. Often, in the instance of a continuance, a judge may not specifically state what is happening on the record. This legislation clarifies the process and aligns the terminology with the federal language.

SENATOR OGAN asked if the purpose of the bill is to align the language or to get federal funds.

MS. TUPOU replied the purpose is to comply with federal language and to create a better statute.

CHAIR SEEKINS said in some cases the court may place a child in agency custody of the department, but in other cases it might decide on temporary legal custody to be able to determine whether or not the child is at risk.

SENATOR OGAN asked if more children might be placed out of the home as a result of changing "emergency" to "temporary legal."

MS. TUPOU said that is not the intent but deferred to the legal drafter for further information.

MS. JEAN MISCHEL, legislative counsel, Legislative Legal and Research Services, Legislative Affairs Agency, said the term "temporary legal" encompasses non-physical custody of a child in the event that a court determines that placement of the child with the parent or guardian is not contrary to the child's welfare. The parent or guardian would maintain physical custody but the state would control certain aspects of that child's life.

CHAIR SEEKINS asked if that dovetails into the language on line 4, page 2.

MS. MISCHEL replied, "That's right. It's a placement question versus legal custody."

CHAIR SEEKINS thought that using this language might make it easier to determine whether a child should be placed outside the home.

MS. MISCHEL added that the standard to remove a child will not change and is based on a child in need of aid (CINA) as defined in statute.

SENATOR OGAN moved CSSB 288(JUD), version U, from committee with attached fiscal notes.

CHAIR SEEKINS said with no objection, CSSB 288(JUD) would move to the next committee of referral.

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^#SB307

**SB 307-APPEAL BONDS: TOBACCO SETTLEMENT PARTIES**

CHAIR SEEKINS announced that SB 307 was before the committee and that a new committee substitute (CS) was prepared, labeled version I. He informed members that in version I, the bond limit was increased from \$25 million to \$100 million on page 2, line 2, and Section 1(b) was added on page 2, beginning on line 4. Section 1(b) reads:

If a court finds that an appellant is dissipating assets outside the ordinary course of business to avoid the payment of a judgment, the court may require the appellant to post a bond in an amount up to the full amount of the judgment.

SENATOR THERRIAULT moved to adopt version I as the working document before the committee.

CHAIR SEEKINS asked if there was any objection or discussion.

SENATOR OGAN stated that he had some reservations about the bond limit in the last version of SB 307 because the \$25 million limit was fairly low compared to other states' limits. He felt that \$25 million was low enough to provide an incentive for defendants to appeal a case for the purpose of dragging it out. He said the new \$100 million bond limit raises his comfort level enough so that he no longer objects to the bill moving [from committee].

SENATOR ELLIS asked if anyone was available to testify.

CHAIR SEEKINS said that a few people had signed up to answer questions only. He said he is not aware of any further objections from the people who spoke to the committee at the last hearing. He said the companies involved have not objected to the changes.

SENATOR OGAN moved CSSB 307(JUD), version I, from committee with its attached fiscal notes and individual recommendations.

SENATOR ELLIS objected.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion to move CSSB 307(JUD) carried with Senators Ogan, Therriault and Seekins in favor, and Senator Ellis opposed.

CHAIR SEEKINS announced that CSSB 307(JUD) moved to the next committee of referral.

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^#HB31

^#HJR5

**HB 31-INITIATIVE/REFERENDUM PETITIONS**  
**HJR 5-CONST AM: INITIATIVE/REFERENDUM PETITIONS**

MR. TIM BARRY, aide to Representative Bill Williams, sponsor of HB 31 and HJR 5, explained to members that the two pieces of legislation would put a constitutional amendment on the ballot in the fall of 2004. The constitutional amendment would change the requirements to put an initiative on Alaska's ballot. The Constitution currently requires a petitioner to submit the signatures of at least 10 percent of the voters at the most recent general election and those signatures must be from at least 27 of the 40 House districts. Only one signature from each of the 27 districts is required. In HB 31 and HJR 5, the 10 percent requirement would remain the same but the number of districts would increase to 30 and the signatures would have to total at least 7 percent of the voters at the most recent general election in each of those districts.

MR. BARRY said the legislation carries out the intent of the framers of Alaska's Constitution who included the geographic distribution requirement to insure that no one part of the state could get an initiative on the ballot without support from other parts of the state. HB 31 and HJR 5 will adjust the Constitution to reflect demographic changes that have occurred in the state since statehood. In 1956, three areas of the state had roughly equivalent populations: Southeast, Anchorage, and Fairbanks. Since then, Anchorage has become the dominant area demographically. In addition, changes in technology make it much easier to send petitions around the state to gather support for an issue.

MR. BARRY told members that the National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL) compiled a report two years ago that urged states to adopt the geographic distribution requirement for initiative petition signatures. He said the legislation would not create an undue hardship for initiative sponsors. Members' packets also include data from the Division of Elections that shows that initiative supporters could have met the requirements of the new legislation without much effort. He said among the 10 initiatives that have been on the ballot since 1998, sponsors would have had to gather an average of 935 additional signatures to comply. On average, sponsors gathered 40,000 total signatures. Most initiatives get on the ballot without any substantial support from any areas of the state. The Division of Elections submitted a fiscal note with a cost of \$1,500. The Alaska Outdoor Council, the Alaska Miners Association, the Alaska League of Women Voters and the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce support HB 31 and HJR 5.

CHAIR SEEKINS asked Mr. Barry to provide specific examples of some of the last initiatives.

MR. BARRY referred to a chart in members' packets and pointed to the billboard initiative in 1998 and the districts with 7 percent of the signatures.

CHAIR SEEKINS noted a large group of districts in the middle always seems to have at least 7 percent, but the districts on either end do not.

MR. BARRY said the bulk of signatures are being gathered on every initiative in districts 10 through 29.

CHAIR SEEKINS asked if the rural districts are not being included.

MR. BARRY said that is exactly correct. He noted it is a lot simpler to get an initiative on the ballot today without leaving the Anchorage - Mat-Su Valley area.

CHAIR SEEKINS said each district has the same number of voters, roughly, so a lot of people in the state are not being asked their opinion in the first place.

MR. BARRY agreed and added that he has heard a lot of testimony from folks from rural areas who do not feel they are being represented in this process at all.

SENATOR OGAN said he supports these pieces of legislation. He said he found the advertising for the billboard initiative to be very offensive because it depicted scenic roads in Alaska covered with billboards while the real issue had to do with directional signs placed by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF). He said his district is made up predominantly of strip development and businesses must be located along the highway because no signs are allowed to lead customers elsewhere. However, on private property, a business owner can put up as many ugly signs as he wants to. He said the people voted for strip mall development that looks ten times worse than a directional sign because of poor advertising. He said his point is that ballot issues are often decided on emotion and a sound byte that has nothing to do with the truth.

SENATOR OGAN then said if the voters pass this constitutional amendment, the people who have been disingenuous about various issues might wake up a little bit. He said obviously managing

wildlife is the legislature's responsibility and should not be done at the ballot box. He asked whether the sponsor has considered narrowing the bill to wildlife issues only.

MR. BARRY said he is not comfortable answering that question right now.

SENATOR OGAN responded:

Because while people may wish to be misled with emotional advertising that has nothing to do with the truth, some issues, an issue as important as wildlife, as much as people in rural Alaska depend on wildlife, I think that's a higher cause [indisc.] than not having mini-billboards, or whatever you wanted to call them. But it has a very real effect on people in rural Alaska, for example, you know, these wildlife initiatives. We're talking about bear baiting now ... I went up and talked to those guys and I'm sure everybody I talked to was a professional signature gatherer because they didn't know anything about the issues. You know, I would sit there and debate it with them and then after about 10 minutes I'd tell them, you know, I'm the chairman of the Senate Resources Committee and sorry, you're wrong. These people just - they don't have a dog in the fight other than getting a buck a signature and I find that offensive. I'd champion people if people were willing to get out there and believe in it themselves and put the sweat equity into it. I think that's great. Maybe we should just make it illegal to hire professional - of course that's another issue, I'm sure.

CHAIR SEEKINS took public testimony.

MR. MYRL THOMPSON, chairman of the Ogan So Gone recall, told members he represents 2,200 registered voters in District H. He said, "With all due respect, gentlemen, you guys, you just don't get it. This petition and initiative bill is a travesty. You guys, when is the last time any of you ever collected a petition signature - even one? And I just bet about none of you ever have...."

MR. THOMPSON said the legislature passed a law regarding billboards and that issue was reversed by a ballot initiative by 82 to 18 percent. He asked the committee to quit passing bills

that are against the people of Alaska and support Alaskans for a change.

SENATOR THERRIAULT asked Mr. Thompson if he fundamentally disagrees with requiring signatures from a broader geographic area in the state.

MR. THOMPSON said he fundamentally disagrees with the legislature changing something that isn't broken. He said the spirit of the [initiative process] was to allow the people to get the job done when the legislature does not. He pointed out this legislation does not change the fact that 10 percent of the voters in the most recent election must sign. A person must accompany a petition booklet to a village so the 10 percent requirement is most important - those signatures do not have to come from every single village. This legislation makes it tougher on the people that do the job that legislators should be doing.

SENATOR THERRIAULT countered that it sounds like Mr. Thompson is arguing against the current language in the Constitution, which requires that votes be obtained from a larger geographic area.

MR. THOMPSON replied, "No sir, I'm not arguing against that. I think the bill is fine the way it is. It's worked fine for Alaskans. It just puts the measure on the ballot and the voters of Alaska are the people that make the decision and that's the way it should be in a democracy."

MR. ROGER GAY, a resident of Big Lake, said he opposes this legislation. He believes legislators should leave the Constitution alone - its job is to support and defend the Constitution, not to change it. This proposal is unconstitutional and unconstitutional thoughts should not be "rolling around" in legislators' minds. If the people want to change the Constitution, they can get petition signatures and change it from the outside. He said he has seen more bills in this legislature that propose to change the Constitution in order to put forward pet ideas, which are patently unconstitutional. He stated, "When it comes to integrity and disingenuousness, you guys are pros, especially you Mr. Ogan...."

CHAIR SEEKINS interrupted Mr. Gay and said as chair of the committee he could not allow Mr. Gay to cast any aspersions on any member of the legislature or any other individual. He asked Mr. Gay to keep his comments on the merits of the bill but

cautioned that if he gets personal, he will not be allowed to testify before the committee.

MR. GAY said the constitutional provisions as they stand now work just fine. They allow the people to be heard without having to go before people who will not hear them. He said it is unjust and improper for legislators to put roadblocks in the way of the people's ability to move initiatives along. He said the legislature should not add one cent of cost to the expense of getting an initiative on the ballot. He said this legislation will have a chilling effect on the initiative process.

SENATOR THERRIAULT asked Mr. Gay if he understands that the legislature is the only body that can put a constitutional question on the ballot according to the Constitution. He said the charge Mr. Gay has leveled against legislators is completely erroneous.

MR. GAY said his point is that the Constitution works well as written and he believes that when the legislature, in order to pass a specific piece of legislation, finds it necessary to change the Constitution, the legislature is thinking unconstitutional thoughts. He said the legislature should concentrate on supporting the Constitution as written rather than on ideas that are unconstitutional.

SENATOR THERRIAULT said in that case, the state would have no permanent fund and the idea of a permanent fund couldn't even be entertained. He repeated that he does not believe Mr. Gay understands the mechanism in the Constitution that calls for the legislature to consider those very things Mr. Gay considers to be unconstitutional. The legislature is only empowered to ask the voters if they want to change the Constitution.

MR. GAY said he is not so much opposed to the legislature adding provisions to the Constitution but he gets upset when the legislature reverses constitutional provisions.

SENATOR THERRIAULT said the current wording in the legislation requires two-thirds [of districts]; this legislation adds to that by requiring three-quarters [of districts].

CHAIR SEEKINS maintained that the legislature does not change the Constitution; it only poses the question to voters. In addition, he noted our government is a democratic republic, not a democracy. He said the Constitution itself lays out the process to amend the Constitution.

MS. CHERYL JEBE, President of the League of Women Voters of Alaska, gave the following testimony.

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a member.

In 2001, the state League completed a study and adopted a position to support the existing initiative process with several recommendations for improvement. The one on point here supports a formula for at least 50 signatures in each of two-thirds of the legislative districts in order to reflect statewide interest in a measure.

While these bills have differing numbers of signatures in each district and the number of districts to be included, the concept is consistent with the League's recommendation that initiatives reflect more statewide interest in a measure. This is currently lacking when only 1 signature in most districts is allowable. I have no further comments and would entertain any questions.

SENATOR THERRIAULT asked Ms. Jebe why the League's membership believes more signatures spread out over a larger geographic area is good for the process.

MS. JEBE replied that the League feels the rural areas are not being represented when it comes to having initiatives put on the ballot. Many times the central part of the state moves legislation forward without asking for opinions from rural areas.

SENATOR THERRIAULT asked Ms. Jebe her opinion of the allegation that the Legislature is acting improperly.

MS. JEBE said she does not believe that is true. She said the committee's discussion on how the process works is accurate.

SENATOR OGAN noted the Electoral College prevents states with small populations from being disenfranchised in the presidential election process. He believes this constitutional amendment

parallels that system by keeping the popular will of a particular geographic area from disenfranchising other areas of the state.

MS. JEBE agreed that the rural areas of the state are not adequately considered in the initiative process.

CHAIR SEEKINS said the legislative process is inclusive in that every legislator's vote must be considered so an urban community can pose a question and dominate the rural areas.

MS. JEBE agreed that is the League's concern.

SENATOR OGAN commented that individuals with a certain political agenda often write initiatives yet the use of one word, such as "may" instead of "shall," can have huge consequences. Semantics are often dissected during the legislative committee process to look for unintended consequences. He believes the framers of the Constitution anticipated that because they gave the legislature the authority to amend an initiative or repeal one after two years. So, while they wanted the people to be able to make law by initiative, they recognized that those laws would not get the same amount of scrutiny. He said he doubts most people read the entire initiative they sign and understand the effect that certain words can have.

MS. JEBE said she believes a certain number of people sign a petition so that a measure will get on the ballot to allow other people to have a say on it. She said she quit doing that since she became involved in the League's study.

CHAIR SEEKINS announced that with no further participants, public testimony was closed. He asked that members consider HB 31 first.

SENATOR THERRIAULT said the two-thirds requirement in the Constitution shows that the framers saw the need for geographic representation in the initiative process. Mr. Barry testified that the state's population trends warrant a change to three-quarters to guarantee a better protection of the current demographics.

**TAPE 04-12, SIDE B**

SENATOR THERRIAULT said he does not feel that passage of this legislation raises the bar to the extent that initiatives will be stopped.

SENATOR OGAN asked Chair Seekins if he intends to hold the legislation in committee today.

CHAIR SEEKINS said unless he hears a compelling reason to do so, he is willing to take action on it today.

SENATOR OGAN requested that the bill be held in committee so that he could discuss with the sponsor narrowing the scope of the legislation to wildlife management initiatives.

CHAIR SEEKINS agreed to hold it as the Judiciary Committee is the last committee of referral for HB 31.

SENATOR OGAN noted that the rural-urban divide has prompted a lot of discussion and he believes the current initiative process exacerbates that issue in regard to wildlife management. He believes this legislation will go a long way to send a positive message to rural Alaskans. He pointed out the legislature acts as the assembly for the unorganized areas of the state and, because of that, the legislature should re-enfranchise the rural areas with this new process.

CHAIR SEEKINS commented that some people have used the initiative process to advance their political agendas, including members of the legislature, who have used that process to readdress legislation passed by the entire body. He supports this legislation because he believes the slight additional burden of including the rural areas in this process is reasonable. He said he prefers not to narrow the bill to wildlife management as other issues affect rural communities.

SENATOR THERRIAULT supported Senator Ogan's request to hold the bill in committee. He indicated an egregious example is the East Coast's attempt to control wildlife management in Alaska but he doesn't necessarily agree that splitting the process is a good idea.

SENATOR ELLIS said he does not plan to support anything that leads to greater expense, more difficulty, or limitations on the public to petition the government to redress grievances through the initiative process. He asked the testifiers from the Mat-Su to recognize a variety of opinions about this legislation in the legislature and not to paint all members with the same broad brush.

CHAIR SEEKINS repeated that he will not allow testifiers to cast personal aspersions on anyone during the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings. He then adjourned the meeting at 9:03 a.m.

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