

Introduced: 3/5/74
Referred: State Affairs and
Judiciary

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY THE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
BY REQUEST

2 HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 68

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5 Relating to press responsibility.

6 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

7 WHEREAS freedom of the press has been a long-established constitutional
8 guarantee in this country and is absolutely necessary to the preservation of
9 our democratic society; and

10 WHEREAS, although freedom of the press must not be abridged, it is
11 incumbent upon all press personnel to exercise the power in their hands with
12 discretion and with sound judgment; and

13 WHEREAS, oftentimes, reporters or other press personnel have access to
14 information on a confidential basis or obtain information through their own
15 sources which, if published, perpetrates a disservice either to individuals
16 or groups or society as a whole; and

17 WHEREAS a prime example of press irresponsibility would be the publica-
18 tion, before the fact, of impending police activities; and

19 WHEREAS publication of such articles can cause irreparable harm to the
20 cause of law and order as well as, in some instances, needlessly subjecting
21 law enforcement officers to grave bodily danger and individuals to damaged
22 reputations; and

23 WHEREAS, on the other hand, all law enforcement agencies have the
24 responsibility of protecting confidential information such as that related
25 to planned police action concerning criminal matters;

26 BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that the press is admon-
27 ished to carefully weigh the possible consequences of publishing material
28 which could have an adverse, uncalled-for effect on the rights of a citizen
29 of this state, and the press is reminded that freedom of the press is not

1 license to print everything within the peculiar knowledge of the Fourth
2 Estate; and be it

3 FURTHER RESOLVED that the several elements of the criminal justice
4 system in the state are urged seriously to reexamine and strengthen those
5 security measures essential to the maintenance of confidential information
6 made available to the press and the confidentiality of legal or judicial
7 proceedings that occur before law enforcement activities take place which are
8 of value primarily because of the element of surprise, unless those members
9 of the press to whom privileged information has been made available with the
10 understanding that it will not be revealed until after the law enforcement
11 activities take place are definitely known to be trustworthy.

12 COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the editors of all newspapers
13 in Alaska.