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BY THE RULES COMMITTEE BY
REQUEST OF THE LEGISLATIVE
BUDGET AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

1 IN THE HOUSE

2 HOUSE BILL NO. 932

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 ELEVENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5 A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An act creating the office of rural development, and
7 the Rural Development Council; and providing for an
8 effective date."

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

10 * Section 1. FINDINGS; POLICY, PURPOSE. (a) The legislature finds that
11 there is a public interest in the development of a healthy private economic
12 base in rural Alaska, that the rural areas of the state and the many small
13 communities of the state have been in economic crisis for decades, and that
14 in many rural communities a private economic base has ceased to exist which
15 conditions endanger the economic, social, and cultural well-being of the
16 state's rural citizens and the healthy growth and balance of the state's
17 entire economy. The legislature further finds that while many opportunities
18 for economic growth may be available to rural areas, the problems of the
19 state's rural areas are many and complex, spreading beyond the confines or
20 authority of any one program, any one government, or any one policymaker and
21 therefore requiring a special initiative on the part of all concerned
22 parties.

23 (b) It is the policy of the legislature that

24 (1) villages and small communities should exist in the state;

25 (2) there is a special commitment to the development of a private
26 economic base for villages and small communities;

27 (3) the state should use its resources and financial strength to
28 encourage a healthy rural economy;

29 (4) the state has the primary policy responsibility to act and to

1 catalyze commitment among many interests, including the state, federal
2 government, local governments, and the private sector to promote a private
3 economy in rural areas; and

4 (5) the advocacy of a private economy compatible with rural life-
5 style should be of the highest priority of state policy.

6 (c) It is the purpose of this Act to create a governmental structure
7 that will function as the advocate of rural economic issues and rural com-
8 munity issues concerning development within state, federal, and local
9 governments, and in the private sectors, and which will assist rural people
10 and institutions in laying the foundations of a healthy rural private
11 economic base.

12 * Sec. 2. AS 44.19 is amended by adding new sections to read:

13 ARTICLE 3C. OFFICE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

14 Sec. 44.19.191. OFFICE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT. There is established
15 in the Office of the Governor the office of rural development. The
16 director of the office is appointed by the governor and serves at his
17 pleasure. The governor may consult with the council concerning the
18 appointment or discharge of the director.

19 Sec. 44.19.201. COUNCIL ESTABLISHED. (a) There is established
20 the Rural Development Council as the policy council for the office of
21 rural development. The council consists of

22 (1) the lieutenant governor;

23 (2) a member of each house of the legislature appointed by
24 the presiding officer of that house;

25 (3) four state officers appointed by the governor from among
26 the commissioners of the departments of transportation and public faci-
27 lities, environmental conservation, health and social services, com-
28 munity and regional affairs, and natural resources and the director of
29 the division of policy development and planning;

1 (4) two members appointed by the governor who are engaged in
2 private enterprise which has significant rural involvement;

3 (5) six members appointed by the governor who are residents
4 of rural areas of the state; and

5 (6) the director of the cooperative extension service of the
6 University of Alaska.

7 (b) The members of the council appointed by the governor serve at the
8 pleasure of the governor.

9 (c) The lieutenant governor is chairman of the council and one of
10 the legislative members shall be elected by the council as legislative
11 co-chairman.

12 (d) Members of the council serve without compensation but are
13 entitled to per diem and travel expenses provided by law for members of
14 boards and commissions.

15 Sec. 44.19.211. PURPOSE OF THE COUNCIL. The purpose of the coun-
16 cil is to provide policy direction to the office and to assist the
17 office in the performance of the duties of the office. The council
18 shall assist in coordinating the economic development activities of all
19 departments and agencies of government so that the need for those acti-
20 vities and the impact of those activities on rural areas is considered
21 and assist in coordinating the activities of departments and agencies of
22 government which have field responsibilities in the rural areas to the
23 extent that those activities relate to economic development. The
24 council shall also assist the office in its advocacy function.

25 Sec. 44.19.216. MEETINGS. The council shall meet at the call of
26 the chairman or legislative co-chairman, at the request of a majority of
27 the members, or at a regularly scheduled time as determined by the
28 members. The state officers listed in AS 44.19.201(a)(3) who are not
29 appointed to the council are ex officio members of the council and may

1 attend and participate in all meetings of the council but may not vote.
2 The council may convene meetings of heads of agencies or departments
3 which are concerned with rural matters or economic development if the
4 council determines a meeting to be useful.

5 Sec. 44.19.221. POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE OFFICE. The office shall

6 (1) act as advocate for the development of an economic base
7 in rural Alaska, for community development and for public services which
8 will enhance the opportunity for growth of an economic base in rural
9 Alaska, and for other matters and programs useful to development of the
10 private economy in rural Alaska;

11 (2) act as the state agency for federal rural development
12 programs when appropriate;

13 (3) coordinate rural development programs among departments
14 and agencies;

15 (4) act as advocate for rural development programs which are
16 not within the jurisdiction of a specific department or agency;

17 (5) act as advocate for appropriate technology development
18 for rural needs.

19 Sec. 44.19.226. STAFF. Within budget and appropriation limits,
20 the director may hire staff and determine their compensation. Except
21 for making inquiries, neither the council nor an individual member of
22 the council may give orders to the staff on administrative matters.

23 Sec. 44.19.231. REPORTS. Before January 15 of each year the
24 office shall submit to the legislature a comprehensive report describing
25 the activities of the council and the office for the preceding year.

26 Sec. 44.19.236. DEFINITIONS. In AS 44.19.191 - 44.19.236

27 (1) "council" means the Rural Development Council;

28 (2) "director" means the director of the office of rural de-
29 velopment;

1 (3) "office" means the office of rural development.
2 * Sec. 3. This Act takes effect immediately in accordance with AS 01.10.-
3 070(c).
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