

HB

706

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TO: Hugh Malone  
Mike Miller  
Mike Colletta  
John Radar  
Bill Ray  
James Duncan

HOUSE BILL 706 - Re-instates the "Crime" of public drunkenness.

This bill is a giant step backwards in the treatment of Alaska's No. 1 health and social problem. The bill is designed as a convenience tool for the police and will cost the citizens of the State, through the Division of Corrections, an estimated \$50 to \$60 a day per arrest. Also, this bill if enacted, will perpetuate stigma attached to the disease of alcoholism. The only redeeming feature of this bill is that it does provide a mechanism whereby the alcoholic can be sheltered in jails, provided there is room. There is nothing in the bill that will affect the primary problem which public drunkenness is one symptom.

In my opinion, a better approach for the Legislature to take would be to create facilities, properly equipped and staffed, where the root causes of the disease can be treated. Changes in the present law should be passed to allow involuntary commitment to long-term treatment programs for chronic alcoholics who abuse short term services. Funds should be provided to build community based facilities where quality treatment can be provided in the same quiet, dignified surroundings as other sick people. Funds must be provided to provide quality education to children in public schools, grades kindergarden through twelve. Courses should be ongoing attendance required. Obviously, you have been and are going to continue to receive strong pressures

from industry to stop any proposal that draws attention to the dangers involved in the use of beverage alcohol. You will be urged to "bury" any such legislation as has been done with SB 370. We who are concerned about this problem expect it. We have not the wealth to compete with industry lobbyist. I can only state that I have no desire to put the industry out of business. I want to see, if possible, that future generations drink responsibly and that casualties from irresponsible drink have a decent chance to recover.



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