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70

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(9)
Date Referred: March 21, 1994

FURTHER REFERRALS:

State Affairs
Finance

Date of Committee Action: 4/19/94

The HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES Committee considered: CSSB 70(L&C)

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 70(L&C) ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY LOAN GUARANTEES

"An Act establishing a loan guarantee and interest rate subsidy program for assistive technology."

- RECOMMENDATIONS: the same title
 be replaced with _____ a new title
- have attached amendments(s)
 do pass
 do not pass
 no recommendations
 individual recommendations
 additional referral to the _____ Committee

ADOPTS: _____ letter of Intent

- ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S): (Dept) APPROVES PREVIOUS: (Dept/Date)
- fiscal impact _____ fiscal note(s) Education 2/23/94
 zero fiscal note _____ zero fiscal note(s) _____

SIGNING DO PASS	DP	OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS	DNP	NR	AM
<i>[Signature]</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>[Signature]</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
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CHAIRMAN'S SIGNATURE

FISCAL NOTE

2
 Bill Version: SB 70
 (S) Publish Date: 2-23-94

STATE OF ALASKA
 1994 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BI

Revision Date: February 22, 1994 Dept. Affected: Education
 Title: An Act establishing a loan guarantee and interest rate subsidy program for Assistive Technology BRU: Vocational Rehabilitation
 Sponsor: Senator Duncan Component: Assistive Technology
 Author: Senator Duncan COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 1202

Expenditures/Revenues	(Thousands of Dollars)					
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS	100.0	100.0	100.0	0	0	0
TOTAL OPERATING	100.0	100.0	100.0	0	0	0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						

FUND SOURCE	(Thousands of Dollars)					
1002 Federal Receipts	100.0	100.0	100.0	0	0	0
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF:Program Receipts						
1006 GF:MHTIA						
Other						
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	0	0	0

Estimate of any current year (FY94) cost: \$ 0

POSITIONS						
FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

See attached

Changes in SB 70 (L.C.) reflect NO FISCAL CHANGE from the original fiscal note. This fiscal note is appropriate.
2/22/94 ADT
 date Comte Aide (initial)

Prepared by: Keith J. Anderson, Director Phone: 465-6922
 Division: Vocational Rehabilitation Date: February 22, 1994
 Approved by Commissioner: [Signature] Date: 2-22-94
 Agency: Department of Education

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FISCAL NOTE

State of Alaska
1993 Legislative Session

BILL NO. SB 70

Title: An Act establishing a
loan guarantee and interest rate
subsidy program for Assistive
Technology.

Department Affected: Education
BRU: Vocational Education
Component: Assistive Technology

Sponsor: Senator Duncan
Requestor: Senator Duncan

The Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATA) Advisory Board has recommended to the division that we investigate using federal funds generated through the ATA project to fund the Technology Loan Fund. With this direction we have proposed to the federal funding agency a plan to fund the loan program by using federal receipts instead of state capital or general funds.

If approved ATA's fourth year grant includes a plan by which grant funds can be used to establish the loan fund. This would provide seed money to establish the loan fund. If this bill becomes law, the division can, by July 30, provide approximately 100.0 for this purpose. It is our understanding that this amount of money can be leveraged into as much as 750.0 as a guarantee and interest buy down depending on how the banking industry recommends the loans be set-up. This legislation forms a partnership between private industry and government to meet the needs of Alaskans with disabilities.

No additional staff cost.

Initial funding 100.0 from federal receipts, one year capitalization only.



Alaska State Legislature
 House of Representatives
 COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION
 AND SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: 4/19/94

PLACE: Capitol Room 106

SUBJECT OF MEETING:
 SB 312: SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BOND REVIEW
 SB 70: ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY LOAN GUARANTEES

NAME	REPRESENTING	BUSINESS/PERSONAL MAILING ADDRESS	ZIP	(H) PHONE	(W) PHONE	DO YOU WANT TO TESTIFY?	WHAT SUBJECT/ WHICH BILL?
Robert Berryhill	AARP	157 Eekwong, JUNIE	99801	586-764		<input checked="" type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	SB-70
Emerson E. Dawson	AARP	604 70995 Jones	99802	588-3816		<input checked="" type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	SB-70
Earl Clough	SAIL	9163 PARKWOOD	99801	289-9235	9-9665	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	SB-70
Mura Howe	DOE				465-2971	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	SB 312
Stan Ridgeway	DUIZ				465-693	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	SB-70
						<input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	
						<input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	
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						<input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	



Alaska State Legislature
House of Representatives
 COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION
 AND SOCIAL SERVICES

SUBJECT OF MEETING:

DATE:

PLACE: Capitol Room 106

NAME	REPRESENTING	BUSINESS/PERSONAL MAILING ADDRESS	ZIP	(H) PHONE	(W) PHONE	DO YOU WANT TO TESTIFY?	WHAT SUBJECT/ WHICH BILL?
<i>Patricia Higgins</i>	<i>David Schmitt</i>	<i>9140 GRANITE PL</i>	<i>99507</i>	<i>349 368</i>	<i>269-7111</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y	<i>SR 312</i>
						<input type="checkbox"/> Y	
						<input type="checkbox"/> Y	
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						<input type="checkbox"/> Y	



SENATOR JIM DUNCAN
ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Alaska State Senate

State Capitol • Room 119 • Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182 • (907) 465-4766 • Fax 465-4748

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 23, 1994

To: Representative Cynthia Toohey, Co-Chair
House Health, Education, & Social Services Committee

From: Senator Jim Duncan

Subject: CS SB 70 (L&C); an act establishing a loan guarantee and interest rate subsidy program for assistive technology.

I urge you to schedule the earliest possible hearing for Senate Bill 70 in the House Health, Education and Social Services Committee.

This bill establishes the Assistive Technology Loan Guarantee Program. The program will assist persons with disabilities to purchase durable equipment, adaptive aids, and assistive devices to obtain or maintain employment or to live more independently. **SB 70 is substantially similar to a bill which you heard and moved from HESS committee earlier this year, HB 139.**

The program will allow the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to guarantee loans or reduce the interest rate on loans from private lending institutions to make the payments more manageable for consumers.

The person with a disability must be unable to obtain the needed equipment through the Division, Medicare, Medicaid, or other funding sources such as insurance companies. Application for a loan will be made directly to a lending institution which will evaluate the credit-worthiness of the individual. If the institution determines the individual can repay the loan, but only with a lower interest rate or with a loan guarantee, the borrower will be referred to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for assistance through the Assistive Technology Loan Program.

The Department of Education supports this bill. **The funding for the loan program is entirely from federal grants which are anticipated to continue into the foreseeable future.**

I urge your prompt and favorable action on SB 70.

Attachments

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Assistive Technology

Background

Technology such as computers and wheelchair ramps help people with disabilities to communicate more effectively, to work, and to gain access to independent lifestyles. Work place changes can pave the way to economic independence.

A 1991 study estimates that over 23,000 Alaskans could benefit from assistive technologies. However, everyone benefits when people who would otherwise depend on social welfare programs become financially self-sufficient through employment.

People with disabilities have a right to assistive technology under the federal laws Technology-Related Assistance For Individuals With Disabilities Act of 1988, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. Programs created by these laws are largely funded by the federal government with some state costs.

Until recently, several organizations offered "lending libraries" of assistive technology. None of these libraries was comprehensive. Small lending libraries have been pooled to create one comprehensive source to lend assistive technology to individuals with disabilities statewide.

The state Department of Education's Assistive Technologies of Alaska program has developed a computerized Cooperative Service Directory in cooperation with service agencies nationwide. Alaska is the first state to coordinate this directory among DOE divisions and the Department of Health and Social Services. This cooperative effort eliminates duplication, increases inter- and intra-agency coordination, meets several federal requirements at once, and is significantly less costly than developing multiple directories.

Problem

Nearly 8,000 Alaskans want and need but do not have access to assistive technologies.

Strategy

- A program of state guaranteed low-interest, long-term loans to individuals with disabilities for purchase of assistive devices would address the gap in statewide services.
- Continue coordinating efforts across Departments and divisions to assure that existing assistive technology resources are used effectively.

loan.facts

"TOOLS FOR LIFE" FACT SHEET

WHAT ARE THESE "TOOLS"?

*Daily Living Aids: Self-help devices that enable people who experience a disability to be more independent around the house-eating, cooking, maintenance, etc...

*Augmentative Communication: Electronic and non-electronic devices that help people without speech to express themselves verbally as well as receive communication.

*Computer Applications: Devices that enable people with disabilities to use a computer-headsticks, alternate keyboards, special software, etc...

*Environmental Control Systems: Usually electronic systems that enable someone to control household appliances, thermostat, TV, stereo, door locks, etc...

*Home/Worksite Modifications: Usually structural adaptations in the home or work such as ramps, raised tables, etc...

*Prosthetics and Orthotics: Braces, artificial limbs and other equipment that replaces or augments missing or malfunctioning body parts.

*Seating and Positioning: Accommodations to a wheelchair or other seating system to provide the user with greater body stability, support, posture, etc...

*Aids for Vision/Hearing Impaired: Aids for people with specific disabilities including magnifiers, Braille devices, hearing aids, etc...

*Wheelchairs/Mobility Aids: Manual and electric wheelchairs, and other equipment that assists people with disabilities to move about.

*Vehicle Modification: Hand controls, wheelchair lifts, modified vans, etc.

*Recreation Devices/Adaptations: Assist people to recreate more independently.

*Adaptive Toys: Toys useable by children who experience a disability.

FACT SHEET

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WHO NEEDS THESE "TOOLS"?

According to a recently conducted random, digit-dial phone survey conducted by the University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), March, 1991, there are more than 4,000 Alaskans with disabilities who can benefit from assistive technologies. This figure considered *very low* because it does not include individuals living in institutions, without phones or who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control is now reporting that 1 in every 6 Americans experiences a disability and that this rate is increasing as a result of the "greying" of our society and advancing medical research and treatment. This would then suggest that a more accurate estimate of Alaskans of any age who are disabled would approximate 91,850 persons. As many as 25%, or 22,963, may have disabilities severe enough to benefit from assistive devices and strategies. These tools, both "low" and "high tech, would vastly improve their independence.

AREN'T THESE "TOOLS" EXPENSIVE?

The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities found in a nationwide survey of employers that most jobsite modifications for workers cost under \$600. Some of the most common "tools", eyeglasses and hearing aids, run between \$100 and \$300. Frequently, devices under \$10, such as hand grippers or extended tongs, provide individuals with disabilities more access. And, sometimes, solutions can even be at no-cost...like reorganizing one's work or living space or labeling a stove with embossed plastic tape.

WELL, THEN WHY DO WE NEED AN ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY LOAN OR GRANT PROGRAM?

Though Alaska has a highly developed network of public, private, non-profit and for-profit agencies and organizations attempting to assist individuals of any age who are disabled become more independent and self-sufficient, they do not have the fiscal resources to continue to meet the ever, expanding assistive technology needs of persons with disabilities, their families and employers. The ISER study referenced earlier, shows but the "tip of the iceberg" of need. If Alaskans with disabilities cannot

obtain these vital "tools" as their needs and technology changes, the state will have lost one of their most vital natural resources.....people who with some assistance can and will make contributions to our education, economic as well as community systems.

WILL "TOOLS FOR LIFE" WORK?

There are expanding "success stories" happening at this very moment in other states and across the nation where persons with disabilities are accessing monies to purchase assistive technologies through loans and to a lesser degree grants.

In Maine, The Adaptive Equipment Loan Program (AELP) has been operational since 1988. Bonds totalling \$5,000,000 were sold and support a revolving loan fund which is available to its citizens and businesses to provide assistive technology. Administered through their state Finance Authority, AELP has closed a total of 129 loans effective July 1991 at \$1,286,510, based on an average interest rate of 6.04%. They have experienced only one default.

Kurzweil/Xerox joined forces with the American Foundation for the Blind in a unique, private-public cooperative venture to make \$2,000,000 available to blind consumers for purchase of their reading machines. Through the Bank of Boston, they have made available over 85 loans and have experienced no defaults! Rising interest earnings from these transactions will be used to expand this effort further into offering grants to more high-risk borrowers to meet their down payments.

The California Department of Rehabilitation administers two assistive technology financing programs. The first, the Handicapped Transportation Loan Guarantee Program (HTLGP), was established by their state legislature in 1981 with a \$300,000 appropriation. It encourages banks to extend credit to children with disabilities and their families who use wheelchairs to purchase vehicles and other special adaptive equipment. Over 43 loans have been guaranteed with 8 defaults and the fund has now grown to \$430,000.

The second program, Assistive Technology Guarantee Program (formerly the Supported Employment Loan Guarantee Program), was actually "seeded" with \$200,000 from the HTLGP and its resources are now \$296,000. Furthermore, borrowers who are disabled may utilize monies towards employment devices as well as for

loan.draft, p. 4

independent living. California Vocational Rehabilitation is presently looking at starting a third fund for fleet van purchases for adult consumers.

For four years Rhode Island's Vocational Rehabilitation office has administered a state appropriated revolving fund, Equipment Loan Fund, which started at \$100,000 and has now gone to \$120,000. At an interest rate of 5%, about 35 residents who are disabled have been serviced with 8 more on the current waiting list. Individual loans may not exceed \$5,000.

Easter Seal Systems in Chicago, Illinois, has just received a Federal grant under the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals Who Are Disabled Act, P.L. 100-407, to develop a replicable, national model for loan funds. From a base of \$50,000, they have made 10 loans to date and have 8 more under processing. Each loan must be for computer equipment only and cost no more than \$3,000. So far, they have had zero defaults and no payment delays.

Though just becoming functional, Vermont has enacted legislation to start an Adaptive Equipment Revolving Fund which is quite innovative. They have a base of \$50,000 and a 3-tiered approach, ranging from non-repayable grants for up to \$1,000 to fund raising through a designated non-profit corporation for items in excess of \$5,000. Another, Nevada, has just started a loan fund initiative in private sector cooperation with Valley Bank of Nevada. They are working from a "seed" of \$100,000 and an individual loan cap of \$3,000. They are hopeful of expanding into offering grants too for those that cannot qualify through even lenient credit guarantees.

The movement does not stop there. Minnesota, Utah, Arkansas, North Carolina, Hawaii, Virginia, Georgia, Florida and Mississippi have assistive technology loan funds under study at this moment within their state legislatures.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES OF ALASKA

A report on the need for tools that enable Alaskans with disabilities to live, learn, work and play more independently



ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES OF ALASKA

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY BACKGROUND

This booklet has been paid for with federal funds as part of a grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education, and was administered by the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

For more information, additional copies or a non-print format of this document contact Assistive Technologies of Alaska at the following address:

Assistive Technologies of Alaska
400 D Street, Suite 230
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Phone: (907) 274-0138
TDD: (907) 274-0517
FAX: (907) 274-0516



ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES OF ALASKA

The goal of Assistive Technologies of Alaska (ATA) is to increase awareness of specialized equipment that can enhance the independence of people with disabilities, and to provide access to this equipment and technology.

ATA works in a direct and complementary role with other service providers. It plans to establish channels for information on new technologies and resources to be shared by various organizations and distributed to those who may benefit from them.

Four significant findings pave the way for ATA

This document summarizes a study conducted in the spring of 1991 by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), at the University of Alaska, Anchorage.

Surveyors polled Alaska residents at random by telephone, uncovering the following four major findings. These findings are significant in setting the goals and directions for Assistive Technologies of Alaska.

- Communications devices represent Alaska's largest single assistive technology need.
- Almost 4,000 Alaskans with disabilities lack current information regarding assistive technology.
- Alaska Natives exhibit a much higher need for assistive technology than do other races.
- Rural Alaskans with disabilities experience the greatest need for all forms of assistive technology.

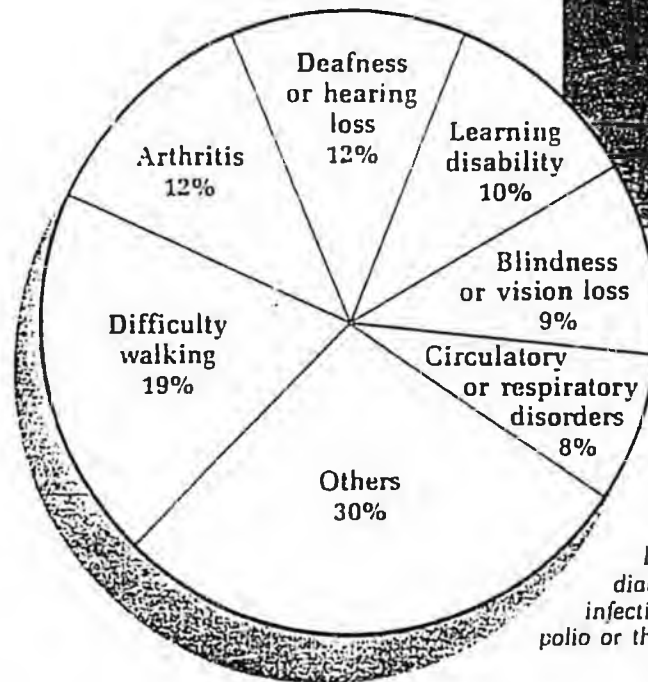
Complete survey results follow. It is important to note that the telephone poll may have resulted in low figures for deaf persons and those living in rural areas where telephone service is limited. The survey also excluded persons living in institutional settings. The numbers presented in this booklet are arrived at by a method known as statistical inferences.

More than 22,000 Alaskans with disabilities live on their own

The Institute of Social and Economic Research, at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, found 22,220 Alaskans, 4 percent of the state population, have disabilities and live outside of institutions. Their survey found that many of these Alaskans could benefit from additional equipment or services to help them become more self sufficient.

Difficulty in walking is the most common disability

Although Alaskans with disabilities often have more than one, the inability or difficulty in walking is the most common. This is followed by arthritis, deafness or hearing loss, learning disabilities, blindness or vision loss, and circulatory or respiratory problems.



Other disabilities include those with emotional or communicative disorders, head injuries, developmental disabilities, diabetes, stroke, seizure, drug/alcohol addiction, infectious disease, amputation, Alzheimer's disease, polio or the HIV virus.

Many services can help Alaskans with disabilities improve their lifestyles

One of the central goals of persons with disabilities is to live a more independent lifestyle. Alaskans with disabilities expressed a need for many of the following services. Most of the 22,220 identified are getting medical care, but 15 percent (3,416 Alaskans) are not receiving adequate medical care.

Persons Who Need Service	Service	% Not Receiving Service
13,013	Newsletters informing them of services	81%
6,355	Support groups	76%
14,007	Equipment for daily living and information on new products	58%
10,548	A centralized information source	55%
14,092	Help getting benefits available to them	37%
11,458	Job training	32%
10,505	Counseling	32%
17,724	Information on their disabilities	30%
13,790	Advocates to make their problems known	28%
22,220	Medical care	15%

14,000 Alaskans with disabilities would benefit from special equipment

About 14,000 Alaskans felt that special equipment could help them live, learn, work and play more independently. However, these same persons said they were not aware of all of the available equipment and need information on newer products.

More than half are not getting the special equipment they need

Of the 14,007 Alaskans with disabilities who need special equipment, 7,608 (58%) do not have access to the equipment that can help them live more self sufficient lives.

This equipment, called assistive technology, is often far from technical

The equipment available to help persons with disabilities function more independently is called "assistive technology." Some people associate this technology with complex computers or robotics. While these are forms of assistive technology, most Alaskans with disabilities could benefit from simple tools that help with daily living. Some of the most common types of assistive technology include items that help people hear, such as hearing aids; read, with glasses or magnifiers; communicate, through voice synthesizers; or move, with the aid of walkers or wheelchairs.

Assistive technology is needed most often for communications

The task in which the greatest number of Alaskans with disabilities need assistance is in face-to-face communication with others. More than 1,900 Alaskans could benefit from assistive technology such as hearing aids and voice synthesizers.

Help with long distance communication was the second greatest need. Almost 1,700 Alaskans could benefit from tools such as TDDs or speaker phones.



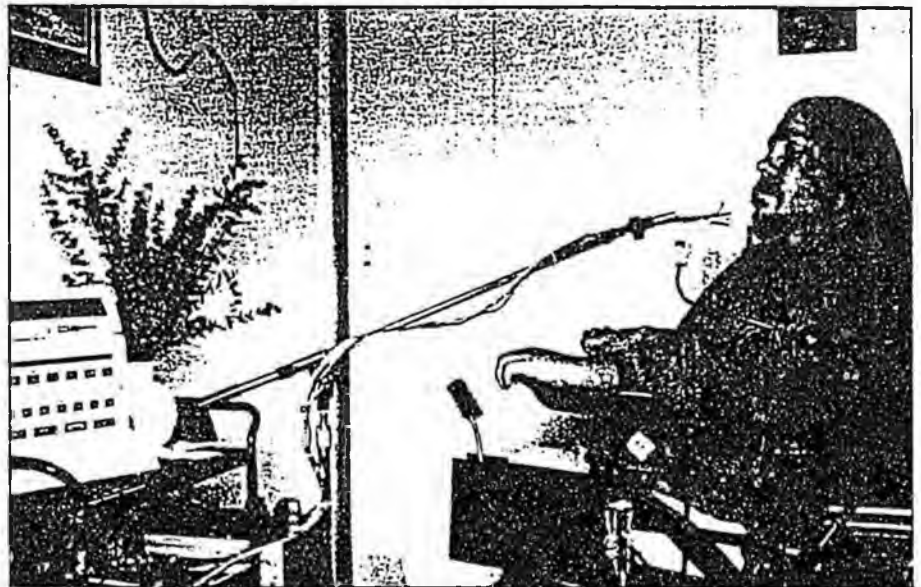
Alterations in the home or office are also important

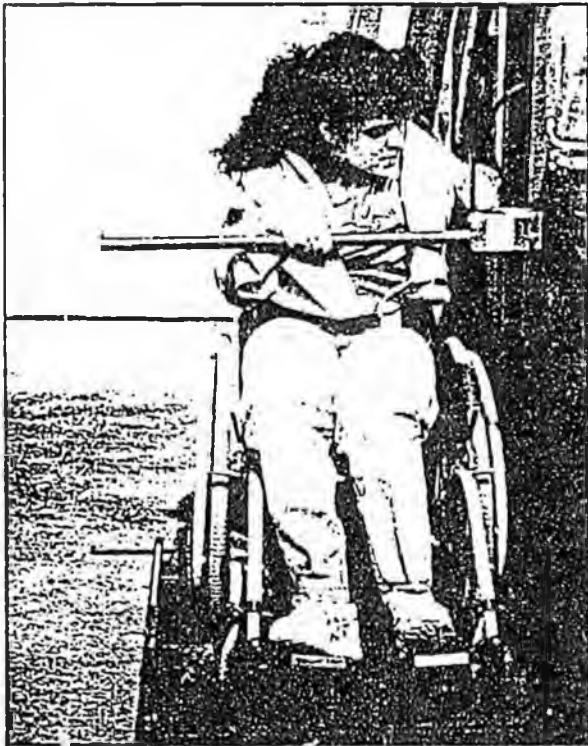
More than 1,600 Alaskans with disabilities need changes to their home or office, including building modifications or special appliances. Assistive technology designed for these uses includes wheelchair ramps, chair lifts, grab bars, pull down door knobs, tables, desks or cabinets that are raised or lowered, and similar devices.

About 1,100 felt a need for specialized control switches for lights, appliances and other environmental control systems.

Computers are adaptable tools

Nearly 1,700 Alaskans with disabilities could use some type of adapted computer equipment. Computers are easily adapted with assistive technology such as magnifiers for the video screen, braille keyboards or verbal input/output devices.





Accessible transportation is needed

Modifications to vans, buses and cars such as hand controls and wheelchair lifts can often make it easier for persons with disabilities to get around. An estimated 1,400 Alaskans see a need for this kind of transportation.



Alaskans with disabilities would like to enjoy recreation activities

A new sense of freedom and ability is often experienced by persons with disabilities when they are better able to enjoy their leisure time through the aid of recreational equipment. Almost 1,200 Alaskans desire access to equipment such as cycle chairs and adapted skis.

Tools that help with personal care are needed by a few people

Assistive aids that help with personal care and hygiene include catheters, bathing aids and commode chairs. This is a significant need for close to 1,000 Alaskans.



Technology can make persons with disabilities better workers

By raising a desk to accommodate a wheelchair, adding screen enlargement software to a computer, or installing pull down door knobs and wheelchair ramps, an employee with disabilities can become a more productive worker. Almost 800 Alaskans believe these assistive aids could help them.

Some Alaskans need help getting around

Slightly more than 700 Alaskans with disabilities need mobility aids. These may include basic wheelchairs, walkers or a guide dog for a blind person.

Type of Assistive Technology	Persons Not Receiving Needed Tools
Face-to-face communication	1,901
Long distance communication	1,688
Adapted computer	1,686
Building modifications	1,632
Accessible transport	1,383
Recreational devices	1,187
Household aids	1,124
Personal care	984
Work modifications	776
Mobility enhancement	735

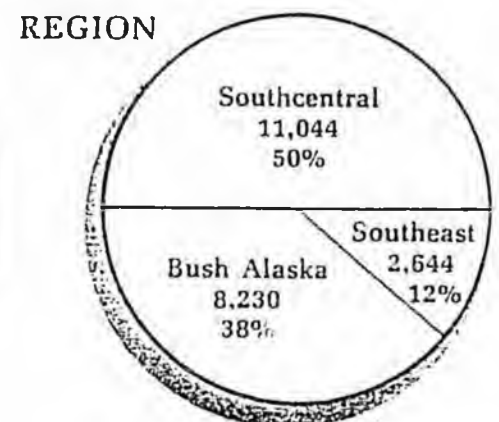
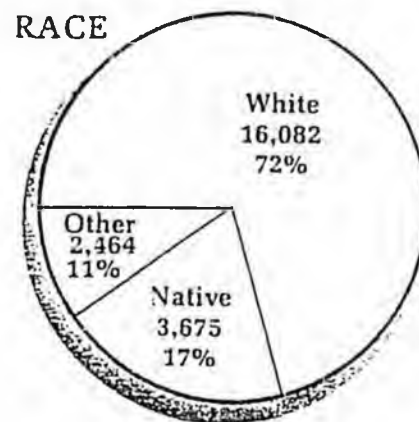
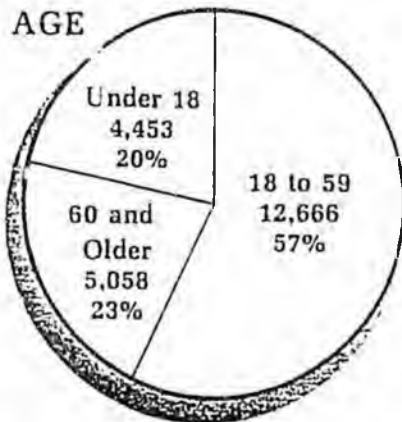
Almost 4,000 Alaskans with disabilities lack the information they need

In order to get the assistive aids they need, Alaskans with disabilities need help finding information on what's available and obtaining financial assistance to buy or lease equipment. Almost 4,000 lack current information about new forms of assistive technology that could help them live more independently.

Type of Service	Persons Not Receiving Needed Information
Information on new technology	3,000
Finding companies that sell or lease equipment	2,000
Financial aid	1,300

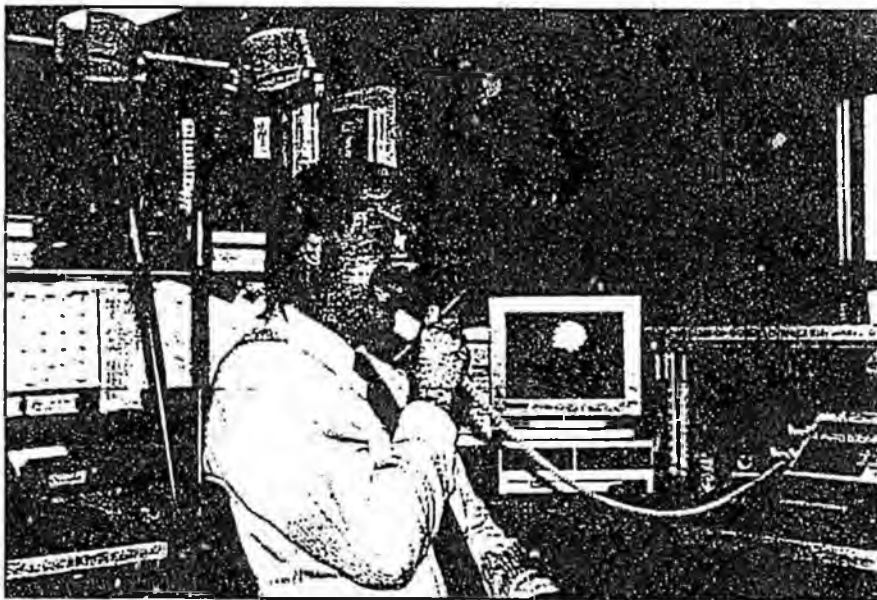
A profile of Alaskans with disabilities

Most Alaskans with disabilities are white, between 18 and 59 years of age and live in Southcentral Alaska. However, a significant number of Alaskans with disabilities are Native, many are 60 years or older and many reside in rural or Bush Alaska.



Younger Alaskans with disabilities see a need for computer-related aids

Alaskans with disabilities under 18 years-old seemed to show the greatest interest in technology adapted to computers. However, this younger group showed less interest in other forms of assistive technology, as did persons who were 60 years or older. This may be because many of their needs are being met by a parent or other member of their household.



Assistive technology is a big need for persons of working age

Technology in the workplace and at home was requested most often by persons with disabilities in the 18-59 age bracket. This is not surprising, since 18-59 is the average span of working years and a time when people usually live independently.

Alaska Natives have a greater need for assistive aids than other races

Alaska Natives, who represent 17% of Alaskans with disabilities, have a greater need for all forms of assistive technology. Their greatest need was for equipment to improve their ability to move around. Natives represented 41% of all Alaskans with disabilities requesting mobility assistance. The second greatest need expressed by Natives was for assistive technology in the home. Accessible transportation, aids to help with face-to-face communication and personal care assistance were the next greatest needs, in that order.



Rural Alaskans with disabilities represent the largest unmet need

A much larger number of rural Alaskans with disabilities require assistive technology of all kinds, compared to the state's major cities. Southcentral Alaska residents showed less need for assistive aids, possibly indicating a greater availability to residents in this region compared to the rest of the state.

The right tools must be found to meet these needs

The ISER study clearly shows that Alaskans with disabilities have many needs that are not being met for all forms of assistive technology. However, the study did not ask exactly how people expected to use this technology to meet their needs. As a result, it is difficult to determine what specific kinds of devices are required. In the case of computer-related technology, specific uses should be determined before deciding what role this often complex equipment may take.

Information services can help determine which tools are best

Access to information about the most current technology available to help with an individual's unique disability will help Alaskans make wiser decisions regarding which forms of assistive technology can best meet their needs.

Major findings from congressional hearings

The following points were documented during Congressional hearings prior to the adoption of the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act in 1988.

- Technology is a powerful force in the lives of most U.S. residents.
- Technology can provide tools to make performing tasks quicker and easier.
- Assistive technology is a necessity that enables individuals with disabilities to engage in many tasks.
- There exists already a substantial number of assistive technology devices.
- The use of assistive technology devices and services can reduce the cost of disabilities to society.
- Many individuals with disabilities do not have access to assistive technology devices and services that would allow them to function commensurate with their abilities.
- There are insufficient incentives for commercial pursuit of the application of devices because of limited markets.
- There is a lack of coordination at the federal level among agencies that provide or pay for the provision of assistive technology devices and services.

The above findings were provided by the RESNA Technical Assistance Project, 1101 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036.



WALTER J. HICKEL/GOVERNOR
State of Alaska

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

P.O. Box 240249 • Anchorage, Alaska 99524-0249 • Phone: 907-563-5355 • Fax: 907-563-5357

March 15, 1994

Senator Rick Halford
Alaska State Senate
Capital Building
Juneau, Alaska 99801 - 1182
(Interdepartmental Mail Stop 3100)

Dear Senator Halford:

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education supports Senate Bill 70 and we request the bill be calendared for a vote by the Senate. As Alaska's Developmental Disability Planning Council, we have studied the bill and worked with people with disabilities to see that their concerns have been addressed in the bill's present form.

It has been said that technology is the great liberator. People with disabilities require access to assistive devices to achieve employment and live with independence. The Council believes that SB 70 will go a long way in accommodating these needs.

The current version of the bill clarifies the administrative procedures that will be used to implement the program. The process to apply for a loan is based upon sound banking principles. Federal money will be used in a creative way to provide a sustainable program for future benefit of Alaskans with disabilities.

Please schedule the bill for Senate action. We would be glad to answer any questions that you may have about the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Maltman".

David Maltman
Executive Director



DENALI STATE BANK

119 N. Cushman Street • (907) 456-1400 • FAX (907) 456-2140 • P.O. Box 74588 • Fairbanks, Alaska 99707-4588

March 10, 1991

Senator Jim Duncan
c/o Alaskan Senate
Juneau, AK

RE: SB373

Dear Senator Duncan:

Thank you for introducing the above referenced bill. This letter is in support of your efforts to provide a loan guaranty and interest rate subsidy program for assistive technology. Passage of this legislation and funding of the program should allow many handicapped citizens of the State of Alaska to continue to be productive workers in our society. As we all know, a mentally or physically handicapped person can contribute much to a business or organization and enactment of this legislation continues to help to accomplish that purpose.

Denali State Bank stands ready cooperate in this program to provide loan funds. I have also discussed this matter with my Alaskan colleagues and find that they are in support of this issue.

May your efforts be rewarded with a swift passage of this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Gary Roth
President and Chief Executive Officer

GR/bf

ROTH LETTER

Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
P.O. Box 107018
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7018
(907)269-4877: Voice (907)269-4879: Text Telephone

March 19, 1993

Senator Jim Duncan
Capitol, Room 119
Juneau, Alaska 99811-1182

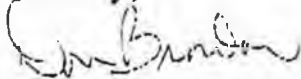
Dear Senator Duncan:

The members of the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities would like to express their support of Senate Bill No. 70 and its companion House Bill No. 139. The Governor's Committee is interested in any legislation which may enable individuals with disabilities to gain, retain or advance in employment.

As you know, this legislation addresses a significant population of individuals in Alaska - the approximately 58% of individuals with disabilities who do not have access to the equipment which can help them live more sufficient lives. Not only will this assist individuals with disabilities, but also their families and businesses.

The Governor's Committee supports the intent of SB-70 and HB-139 and will be monitoring its progress as it makes its way through committee. If we can be of assistance in any way, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Don Brandon, Chair

