

**HB**

**270**

# FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA  
1998 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB 270

Revision Date: 03/31/98 Dept. Affected: Health and Social Services  
 Title: An act relating to premarital relationships BRU: State Health Services  
 Component: Bureau of Vital Statistics  
 Sponsor: Kempien COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 961  
 Requestor: House HES See also (SN#): \_\_\_\_\_

**Expenditures/Revenues:** (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02	FY03	FY04
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL	2.0					
CONTRACTUAL	2.5					
SUPPLIES	3.8					
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>						
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<b>CHANGES IN REVENUES</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>75.0</b>
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**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts	8.3					
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (please specify)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**POSITIONS:**

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

Estimate of any current year (FY98) cost: \$0.0

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Redesign and reprint appropriate forms = \$3.8  
 Revise bureau computer programs to accommodate new certificate design (25 hours @ \$100/hour = \$2.5)  
 Conduct training in new marriage processing requirements in Anchorage and Fairbanks \$2.0  
 Assuming that the surcharge is sufficient to encourage 95% of the people married in Alaska to attend marriage counseling mean approximately 300 applicants will pay the surcharge = \$75.0

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Phone: 907-465-3098  
 Date: 03/11/98

Approved by Commissioner: Karen W. Wilbur, Commissioner  
 Agency: Department of Health & Social Services

Date: 3/31/98

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amended

3/31/98

AMENDMENT # 1

OFFERED IN THE HOUSE

BY REPRESENTATIVE KEMPLER

TO: HB 270

- 1 Page 1, line 5, following (b)
- 2 Delete all through line 9
- 3 Insert "A surcharge of \$275.00 shall apply to the fee for all marriage license
- 4 applications unless the applicants submit acceptable evidence of having
- 5 received at least 4 hours of relationship counseling. Acceptable evidence of
- 6 such counseling shall be a certificate attesting under oath or affirmation of
- 7 the counselor and the parties that the parties have completed at least 4 hours
- 8 of relationship counseling in the six months immediately preceding
- 9 application for a marriage license."

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ALLEN KEMPLEN

## SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR HOUSE BILL 270

**"An Act relating to premarital relationship counseling; amending Rule 9(e)(7), Administrative Rules of Court."**

A marriage is a social contract entered into by committed and sincere individuals; a partnership between two people who pledge mutual respect, responsibility and support. It is a formal recognition that a family is being created. The family is the basic building block of a healthy community. It is the only institution in society whose main purpose for existing is the full-time nurturing of children. Children are usually better off when they live with parents who have made more than a passing commitment to each other.

Historically, the extended family of grandparents, aunts and uncles provided the collective wisdom to which couples turned when relationships ran into stormy weather. Nowadays, we seem to have lost, for one reason or another, the close knit support network which nurtured enduring relationships. A marriage would be strengthened by forging stronger relationship skills before a couple made their commitments to one another.

This legislation would establish an incentive for marriage applicants in Alaska to attend a minimum of four hours of relationship counseling. The counseling would occur within a six month period immediately prior to marriage vows. This pre-marital training would establish a basic understanding of marriage, relationships and the responsibilities of partnership. It would increase the likelihood that relationships would survive the challenges of children, work and the pursuit of happiness. An incentive for relationship counseling would produce stronger Alaskan families.

**I urge your support and prompt passage.**

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## BACKGROUND

### HB 270: An Act Relating To Premarital Relationship Counseling

Journal of Marital and Family Therapy  
1989, Vol. 15, No. 3, 311-322

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#### PREDICTING MARITAL SATISFACTION USING PREPARE: A REPLICATION STUDY\*

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*This study clearly replicated the previous findings which demonstrated the predictive validity of PREPARE. Like the previous study, this longitudinal study was a 3-year follow-up of 179 couples who took PREPARE during their engagement. As in the initial longitudinal study, PREPARE predicted, with a best 80% accuracy, couples who got divorced from those that were happily married. Also, the same linear trend in PREPARE scores was found (highest to lowest scores): happily married, unhappily married, cancelled/delayed marriage, and separated/divorced. This study further indicates the importance of the premarital period as the foundation for marriage and the ability of PREPARE to identify high-risk premarital couples who could benefit from premarital counseling. Premarital counseling could potentially help these high risk couples develop a more satisfying marriage.*

The possibility of predicting marital satisfaction and success prior to marriage has long fascinated researchers and clinicians.

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A recent longitudinal study conducted by Fowers and Olson (1986) attempted to predict marital dissolution based on premarital inventory scores. The authors conducted a 3-year follow-up of 164 couples who had taken the premarital inventory PREPARE during their engagement. The couples were divided into three groups based on their marital status at the follow-up: (a) happily married, (b) separated or divorced; and (c) never married.

The PREPARE scores were highly predictive of subsequent marital status. Nine of PREPARE's 11 scales consistently predicted marital status. Discriminant analyses of the data predicted the couples' marital status with 74-84% accuracy. The most prominent predictors of subsequent marital success were the Conflict Resolution, Communication, Realistic Expectations, Personality Issues, Leisure Activities, Financial Management, Family and Friends, Equalitarian Roles, and Religious Orientation scales.

This study confirms the importance of premarital relationship factors in the prediction of marital success. The longitudinal design, again, indicates that premarital difficulties may well lead to marital distress and dissolution. The larger sample size provides more confidence in the results.

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#### *Instrument*

PREPARE is a 125-item inventory designed to identify relationship strengths and weaknesses in 11 relationship areas: (a) Realistic Expectations, (b) Personality Issues, (c) Communication, (d) Conflict Resolution, (e) Financial Management, (f) Leisure Activities, (g) Sexual Relationship, (h) Children and Marriage, (i) Family and Friends, (j) Equalitarian Roles, and (k) Religious Orientation (Olson, Fournier & Druckman, 1987). Additionally, the inventory contains an Idealistic Distortion scale which is used to correct the individual scores for social desirability, thereby resulting in a total of 12 scales (see Table 2).

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## DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to replicate a previous study (Fowers & Olson, 1986) regarding the predictive validity of PREPARE. In general, the findings were very comparable, providing greater confidence in that predictive capacity than could be justified by a single study. Engaged couples who view various aspects of their relationship positively and tend to agree with each other are more likely to be satisfied with their marriages 3 years later. This suggests that potential discord and dissolution up to 3 years after marriage can be identified during the engagement period.

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The overall results of the two studies are more clearly in general agreement. Both projects indicate the importance of Realistic Expectations, Personality Issues, Conflict Resolution, Communication, Leisure Activities, Family and Friends, and Religious Orientation scales in describing marital success. Both studies also failed to find any predictive validity for the Financial Management and Children and Parenting scales. It may well be that engaged couples have difficulty responding to items that pertain entirely to future events, such as finances and children.

While some earlier studies suggest that one's role relationship does not predict satisfaction (Fournier, 1979; Fowers & Olson, 1986), this more recent study demonstrates the predictive value of this scale. The Egalitarian Roles scale assesses an individual's beliefs, feelings, and attitudes about roles. High scores represent more flexibility regarding work in or out of the home and a commitment to shared responsibilities.

The importance of the Leisure Activities scale in this study deserves further comment. The items in the Leisure Activities scale measure satisfaction with spending free time alone and together as a couple. Klagesbrun (1965) writes that "Strong marriages try to find a balance between participating in another's shared activities and going their own ways" (p. 293). The findings suggest that this scale may, in certain ways, operationalize what may be called a "friendship" variable in marriage. These findings are similar to past research which has documented the association between marital satisfaction and common interests (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Levinger, 1965; South, Snyder, Trull & Monson, in press; Snyder, 1979).

This study, in combination with Fowers and Olson's (1986) results, suggests that PREPARE has very good predictive validity. Both studies utilized longitudinal designs to predict marital status based on premarital inventory scores. This also indicates that the seeds of marital discord and dissolution are present very early in the relationship. The replication greatly increases the confidence with which these conclusions can be drawn. This information is particularly important in premarital counseling programs. Based on these two studies, such programs ought to focus on a couple's realistic expectations, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, leisure activities, family and friends, egalitarian roles and religious orientation.

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"Veil of tears: the church is part of our divorce problem - and solution"  
Michael J. McManus, author  
in *Policy Review*, Wntr 1994 n76 pp. 50-55.

"PREPARE," a premarital inventory developed by Lutheran psychologist David Olson. About 100,000 couples a year complete PREPARE, a questionnaire that can predict with 85 percent accuracy who will divorce. Each person indicates agreement or disagreement with 125 statements, such as "I am concerned about my partner's drinking and/or smoking"; "I can easily share positive and negative feelings with my partner"; or "I wish my partner was more careful in spending money." The inventory provides a virtual X-ray of the relationship, with strengths clearly outlined - as well as areas of conflict.

Dr. James Dobson is a psychologist whose daily radio show, "Focus on the Family," is carried by more than 2,000 Christian radio stations, and whose books on the family have sold more than 7 million copies. In *Love for A Lifetime* he writes: "A dating relationship is designed to conceal information, not reveal it." PREPARE cuts through the facades. And 10,000 to 15,000 couples of 100,000 are so shocked by the results that they break their engagements. They have avoided what would probably have been a bad marriage, researchers say. For those who stay together, the survey strengthens their relationship. That's because the results are not handed over like a report card. Instead, the couple must have two personal meetings with a pastor or counselor to go over results.