

SB

261

Alaska State Legislature

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SB 261 Sponsor Statement

In the fall of 1997, Anchorage was awarded the bid to host the World Special Olympics Winter games in 2001. The bid award was contingent on the State agreeing to be the financial guarantor of the Games.

Working in conjunction with Senator Stevens, the Governor and private industry, Speaker Phillips and I agreed to jointly introduce legislation (HB357) that would "morally obligate" the State to pay any residual costs of the Games if private industry does not raise the money.

The total budget for the games is eight million dollars, four million dollars cash and four million dollars in-kind. In seven months, the organizing committee has raised over one million cash and two million in-kind. With three years left to generate funds, the organizing committee is committed to raising more than what is required host the Games and the legislature will not be required to appropriate funds to cover costs.

The legislation establishes AIDEA as the controlling agency to oversee the organizing committees fundraising activities and to report to the legislature on January 2 of each year the total funds raised to date. In the event that the money is not raised, the legislature would be 'morally obligated' to cover any costs, up to four million dollars.

Alaska is fortunate to have been awarded the bid. Special Olympics is a unique organization that benefits athletes in all areas of our State. The opportunity for them to participate in a worldwide competition with people of their same abilities is a once in a lifetime experience.