

HJR

7

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FILE

HJR 7

was referred to the
Senate Finance
Committee

Hearing(s) were held

The bill did not move
from Committee

February 3, 2000

MEMO TO FILE

TO: Finance Committee

BILL/RES. NO.: **CS HJF. 7(FIN) am**

ATTENTION: Heidi, Vicki
Senate Secretary's Office

This bill/resolution has not yet received a **do pass** recommendation.

Please leave this note in the file.

Thank you.

Coalition for the Alaskan Way of Life

P.O. Box 60954

Fairbanks, AK 99706

Ben Hopson/Chairman Pete Buist /Co-Chair Gabe Sam /Co-Chair

March 30, 2000

Dear Senator Torgerson,

The Coalition for the Alaskan Way of Life (CAWL) was formed two years ago to oppose Proposition 9, the Wolf Snaring Ban. The CAWL effort was able to accomplish a feat many thought impossible. We united sportsmen and Alaska Natives to work together. Groups as diverse as The Alaska Outdoor Council and the Tanana Chiefs Conference put aside their differences and united to defeat Proposition 9. This unity proved to be one of our greatest strengths and a key reason for our victory in 1998.

As sweet as that victory was, it came at a high price in money and manpower. The campaign raised and spent over \$250,000, an absurd amount of money to defend Alaska's Native and cultural heritage of wolf snaring.

Truthfully, Enough is Enough!

"It's time for Rural Alaskans to draw a line in the Snow!"

Rural Alaskans should never have to face another ballot initiative like Proposition 9 that directly attacks our cultural heritage. There are so many other important issues for the Native community to address we cannot afford to squander our hard earned resources on issues like wolf snaring. Now is the time to use the momentum of our Proposition 9 victory and go on the offensive and stop this craziness once and for all.

Representative Bill Williams of Saxman working with CAWL has introduced legislation, which will protect rural Alaska from these frivolous initiatives. That bill, HJR7, is now before your committee. As you know, it is a Constitutional Amendment Resolution that, if passed by the legislature, will insure that rural Alaska will have a voice in Alaska's initiative process and can stop initiatives like Proposition 9 before they get started.

Let us explain our reasoning for supporting HJR7:

Alaska's population distribution is much different now than when our Constitution was written. Today, initiative supporters can collect signatures in densely populated districts in and around Anchorage and get almost any question on the ballot they desire. Whether it is English only, same sex marriage or animal rights sponsored initiatives like wolf snaring, our initiative system plays right into the hands of large, well funded Outside special interest groups from the Lower 48. It is far too easy to abuse the Alaska initiative process by buying a place on the ballot. Here's how the system works now:

Alaska's constitutional laws governing the placing of initiatives on the ballot require signatures to be gathered equal to 10% of those who voted in the last general election or, approximately 21,000 signatures must be gathered to qualify an initiative. A small number compared to other states in the U.S. In addition, those signatures must come from at least 2/3rd's or 27 of the 40 state House districts. We believe it was the clear intention of the framers of the Alaska Constitution that those signatures were to be gathered equally from those 27 House districts. Unfortunately, due to a loose interpretation of the law, that's not what is happening. Since the Alaska Constitution does not specifically require a specified number of signatures to be gathered from each of the 27 house districts virtually all the signatures (in most cases almost 90%) are gathered in the highly populated suburban areas in and around Anchorage. Only a small number of signatures are gathered in a few rural districts to meet the minimum requirements. Rural Alaska is effectively ignored and shut out of the process.

The Alaska initiative system is so loose that signatures could be gathered, the initiative approved by the Lieutenant Governors office and placed on the ballot, approved by voters, and never have a single signature gathered from rural Alaska. We think that is a travesty.

But, fortunately Representative Bill Williams' bill, HJR7, will even the playing field for rural Alaskans and will insure that rural Alaska has a voice in the initiative process.

The original language of HJR7 as introduced by Rep. Williams calls for the total number of signatures required to place an initiative on the ballot be equal to 15% (currently 10%) of those who voted in the last general election. Those signatures must be gathered from a minimum 3/4th's (currently 2/3rd's) of Alaska's election districts; equal to 30 of the 40 House districts. In addition, to ensure representation from rural Alaska, HJR7 requires these signatures be equal to 15% of those who voted in the proceeding election **in each of those 30 house districts.**

As you know the version of HJR7 before your committee has been severely amended and it is our opinion that in its present state does little to rectify the problems inherent in Alaska's initiative process.

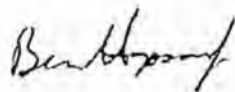
We respectfully request that your committee review the attached information and consider restoring HJR7 to its original form as introduced with one exception. We recommend that your committee raise the required number of districts from which signatures must be gathered to qualify an initiative from the current requirement of $2/3^{\text{rd}}$, and beyond HJR7's requirement of $3/4^{\text{th}}$, to a total of $7/8^{\text{th}}$ or 35 House districts.

The reason for our request is as follows: Obviously, the current $2/3^{\text{rd}}$ requirement is insufficient to grant any representation to rural Alaska, but even increasing the number to $3/4^{\text{th}}$ or 30 House districts will only guarantee marginal representation. Of Alaska's 40 House districts only 10 are truly rural districts. Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau alone comprise a total of 30 House districts. Theoretically at the $3/4^{\text{th}}$ requirement rural Alaska could still be excluded from the signature gathering process. Requiring signatures to be gathered in $7/8^{\text{th}}$ or 35 house districts will guarantee rural Alaska will be represented in the initiative process.

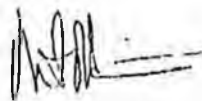
In addition to this request we feel it is critical that attention be given to making sure the number of signatures required from each House district be increased to between 10% and 15%. Please take a moment and refer to the HJR7 Comparison spreadsheet attached to this letter. As you will notice at the bottom of the page, at 4% (the current amended version of HJR7) all the initiatives in 1998 would have still qualified. However, at 10% or above none of the three initiatives, Wolf snaring, English only, or the Marijuana would have qualified because they would not have received the needed support from rural Alaska.

CAWL strongly believes that if rural Alaska must live under the laws created by the initiative process they should also have a say in the ballot questions that are put on the ballot. We sincerely ask for your assistance and the assistance of your committee in restoring our voice to the Alaska initiative process.

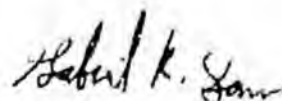
Sincerely,



Ben Hopson, Jr.



Pete Buist



Gabe Sam

District	Votes Cast 98	Wolf	English	Marijuana	HJR7-4%	HJR7-7%	HJR7-10%	HJR7-15%
1 Ketchikan *	5025	45	24	34	201	352	503	754
2 Sitka *	5890	475	27	50	236	412	589	884
3 Juneau	7198	1354	36	798	288	504	720	1080
4 Juneau	6712	1226	36	823	268	470	671	1006
5 S'East Islands *	4924	224	25	100	197	345	492	739
6 Kodiak *	4025	144	115	520	161	282	403	602
7 Kenai *	6832	438	504	314	273	478	683	1025
8 Kenai *	5917	418	855	385	237	414	592	887
9 Kenia *	5223	243	588	254	209	366	522	783
10 Anchorage	6932	1027	1090	957	277	485	693	1040
11 Anchorage	5299	1095	1003	1070	212	371	530	795
12 Anchorage	5791	1027	980	1046	232	405	580	867
13 Anchorage	6331	1440	1013	1136	253	443	633	950
14 Anchorage	3258	821	645	685	130	228	326	489
15 Anchorage	4292	1432	1077	1147	172	300	429	644
16 Anchorage	3162	1403	1099	1369	126	221	316	474
17 Anchorage	5328	1253	1228	1327	213	373	533	799
18 Anchorage	7814	1291	1096	1132	313	547	781	1173
19 Anchorage	5573	1227	1163	1238	223	390	557	836
20 Anchorage	5332	1181	1142	1068	213	373	533	800
21 Anchorage	4973	1138	1027	1130	199	348	487	719
22 Anchorage	6666	1106	995	972	267	466	667	1000
23 Anchorage	2964	640	614	608	108	207	269	445
24 Eagle River	5666	977	871	932	227	397	567	850
25 Eagle River	6103	863	1006	974	244	427	610	915
26 Wasilla	6401	765	1033	895	256	448	640	960
27 Palmer	7868	691	1053	940	315	550	787	1180
28 Talkeetna	7772	919	998	1070	311	544	777	1165
29 Fairbanks	6931	302	407	280	277	485	693	1039
30 Fairbanks	4751	193	393	174	190	332	475	713
31 Fairbanks	4688	205	425	180	188	328	469	703
32 Wainwright	3618	151	284	73	145	253	362	542
33 Fairbanks	6308	198	465	166	256	447	639	946
34 North Pole	4650	153	312	108	186	325	465	698
35 Valdez *	5015	227	271	236	201	351	502	752
36 Tanana *	4762	202	136	214	190	333	476	714
37 Kotzebue *	4059	180	124	186	162	284	406	608
38 Nome *	4412	146	87	162	176	308	441	662
39 Bethel *	4708	217	152	161	188	329	471	706
40 Aleutians *	2556	145	125	173	102	179	256	409
Total	215,539	27,210	24,524	25,087	8,662	15,087	21,555	32,331

*Indicates Rural AK

Total Suburban (27)	152,191-71%	24,061-88%	21,491-88%	22,298-88%	70%	70%	70%
Total Rural (13)	63,348-29%	3,149 -11%	3,033-12%	2,789-11%	30%	30%	30%
Total Anch/MatSu (19)	107,525-71%	20,296-84%	19,133-89%	19,786 -89%			

	Wolf	English	Marijuana
How Districts	30@4%	32@4%	27@4%
Would Have	22@7%	25@7%	23@7%
Qualified in 1998	20@10%	21@10%	22@10%
Under HJR7	20@15%	21@15%	22@15%

**Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing – 1/25/00
Alaska Outdoor Council Testimony on HJR 7
Ballot Box Biology and the Initiative Process**

Richard Bishop, Vice President

Mr. Chairman, Committee members,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am Dick Bishop, Vice President of the Alaska Outdoor Council, a statewide umbrella organization comprised of over 40 user-conservation outdoor groups plus now up to nearly 2000 individual members. Our total membership is 10 to 11,000 Alaskans and a few interested Outsiders.

Mr. Chairman, the Outdoor Council opposes the use of "Ballot Box Biology" in the management of fish and wildlife. Nationally, the initiative process has been used in a number of the 24 states where it's available to circumvent a rational public process for the management of fish and wildlife. It has become fashionable for animal protection and anti-hunting groups. It has also been effective, because an emotionally charged message can be marketed effectively on today's electronic media.

There is no law requiring truth in advertising. Fish and wildlife management policy can be flip-flopped by a barrage of 30-second sound bites influencing the "majority of the moment" – even though the sound bites misrepresent the issue.

We saw that in Alaska with proposed bans on same-day aerial shooting of wolves, where the issue was portrayed as aerial shooting, already illegal, and then a proposed ban on wolf snaring. The Legislature had to correct the first one with SB74. Fortunately, the Coalition for the Alaska Way of Life, which we support, beat the anti-snaring proposal.

If the initiative process continues to be so susceptible to irresponsible use, we expect more attacks on scientifically sound fish and wildlife management and on Alaskan's traditional values. "Ballot Box Biology" thumbs it's nose – or worse – at the most open, democratic fish and game management process in the world.

These attacks demonstrate no tolerance of, and no respect for, traditional Alaskan values that depend on sound management and responsible human uses of fish and game.

Yet to cope with these attacks drains the energies and pocketbooks of Alaskan fishers, hunters, and trappers across the state, not to mention the possibility of taking food from their tables and warm clothes from their closet.

The Outdoor Council has advocated a Constitutional amendment making fish and wildlife management ineligible for the initiative process. There is no real bar to public participation in fish and wildlife management. There is more opportunity for public participation in Alaska's fish and wildlife management through the Board and Advisory Committee process than has ever been fully used. But it is a deliberate, rational process, not easily derailed by the emotional, disinformation tactics usually employed by its detractors.

The Alaska Outdoor Council strongly recommends taking fish and wildlife off the initiative eligibility list.

If the Legislature is unable or unwilling to do so, then we urge you to beef up HJR 7 by requiring petition signatures of 15% of previous voters in each House district, from $\frac{3}{4}$ or more (7/8) of the Districts, and with total signatures equaling at least 15% of the number of previous voters in order for the petition to be accepted. HB45 should, of course, be modified accordingly.

At least this would ensure the broader public participation that Rep. Williams set out to ensure, and hopefully it would require more people to give any proposal serious thought.



Teleconference Participants

TCN: 10651

Participant Lists

View List for

ALL

Testifiers

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Participants

Unidentified Testifiers: 0

Unidentified Observers: 1

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