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Alaska State Legislature Senate Majority News

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Seekins offers bill to help fund legal services *SB 388 would aid low income Alaskans*

(JUNEAU)—Low income Alaskans could have greater access to legal services under a bill introduced Thursday by Sen. Ralph Seekins (R-Fairbanks) through the Senate Judiciary Committee, which he chairs.

“We know the civil legal needs of low income people in Alaska aren’t being met due to inadequate funding of the organizations that provide those services,” Seekins said. “This is a way that we can use punitive damages for egregious offenses to provide those services for folks who otherwise couldn’t afford the necessary legal services to carry their case forward.”

Senate Bill 388 establishes a civil legal services fund into which the Legislature can appropriate the state’s share of punitive damages awards. State statute provides that 50 percent of punitive damages in tort cases go to the general fund. Under Seekins’ bill, that money could be placed in the civil legal services fund, which could then be appropriated to organizations that provide civil legal services for low income Alaskans, defined as an individual earning less than federal poverty guidelines.

“We’re not creating a drain on anything except those awards that come to the state under punitive damages awards,” Seekins said. “Instead of putting those awards toward the general fund, we are putting it toward a good purpose of funding legal services.”

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FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2004 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: _____
Bill Version: SB 388
() Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: All
Title Creation of a civil legal services fund RDU _____
Component _____
Sponsor Senate Judiciary Committee
Requester Senate Judiciary Committee Component No. _____

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2004) cost: 0.0
Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2005 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This bill would not have a significant fiscal impact on any state agency. While the bill provides that the legislature may make appropriations from the legal services fund to organizations that provide civil legal services to low-income individuals, these appropriations are not mandatory and no funding is required.

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