

SB

58

Senator Linda Menard

State Capitol, Room 9
Juneau, Alaska 99801



Phone: (907) 465-6600
Fax: (907) 465-3805

Alaska State Legislature

To: Senator Linda Menard, Chair
Senate State Affairs Committee

From: Senator Linda Menard

Date: February 25, 2009

Re: Request for hearing of SB 58

Honorable Senator Linda Menard,

I respectfully request a hearing of Senate Bill No. 58 before the Senate State Affairs Committee

Senate Bill 58 seeks to establish February 2 of each year as Marmot Day.

Thank you for your consideration.

SB 58 “An Act Establishing February 2nd of each year as Marmot Day”

My bill establishes February 2nd as Marmot Day & will create a new and fun day of observance for all Alaskans, especially our children. Adopting Marmot day creates local hire & emphasizes Alaskans' reputation for being independent & creative thinkers.

With this bill, we should not ignore the educational opportunity to teach students about our state's version of the groundhog, incorporating into schools' curriculum geography and science acknowledging a “long under-recognized resident of our state. The Marmot is found in the Brooks Range, Matanuska Valley and are even prevalent in Juneau. Students will have the experience to learn about the marmot's habits – one peculiar one comes to mind: “Did you know that if you whistle at a marmot, they will sit up and whistle **right** back?”

The month of February is certainly a slower time for the zoo. Activities could be built around a symbolic Marmot Day, attracting students and making it a festive and fun day! The Zoo has heartily given their support to Marmot Day as well as the Mat-Su Borough School District, & the guru of tourism, John Binkley.... and we have only begun to inform Alaskans of the possibility of this proposed day of recognition.

As my husband, the late Senator Curt Menard said over 20 years ago, “Some have said, this is not an important bill, but I would argue that there's a long-term value in terms of tourism. In Pennsylvania - where the official groundhog lives, a tourism industry has been built on selling that little critter alone – selling shirts, knickknacks and all kinds of souvenirs.” Curt and I have always said **“We're different up here in Alaska – and, if we're going to be different we don't need to drag up these traditional things from the Lower 48 – we have our own resource – the Marmot.”** Please join me in bringing Marmot Day on February 2nd to our great State. Thank you.

Senator Linda Menard

State Capitol, Room 9
Juneau, Alaska 99801



Phone: (907) 465-6600
Fax: (907) 465-3805

Alaska State Legislature

Sponsor Statement for SB 58

Senate Bill 58, an act establishing February 2nd of each year as Marmot Day, will create a localized, Alaska version of Groundhog Day.

While many people in the Lower 48 spend every February 2nd honoring Punxsutawney Phil, or some other incarnation of the famous groundhog, Alaska residents don't have the same representation.

The Marmot Day bill (SB 58) solves that, giving school children, public institutions and even adults the opportunity to use a local hire (the marmot) as their symbol.

Marmot Day can be celebrated in myriad ways, from special events at the Alaska Zoo to school celebrations with an educational angle so children can learn more about Alaska's furry ground squirrel.

Already, the Marmot Day bill has received support from the Alaska Zoo and the Mat-Su Borough School District.

I hope you will also support the Marmot Day bill.

Hoary marmot

Marmota caligata

Distribution. From the Cascade and northern Rocky Mts. to Alaska. In locations where ranges overlap yellow-bellied marmots (e.g., Montana), hoary marmots are found at higher elevations.

Hoary marmot social organization varies geographically. In Alaska they live in monogamous social groups consisting of a pair of adults and pre-reproductive offspring. In the Rockies and Cascades, hoary marmots live in social organizations that resemble Olympic marmots (breeding male with two or three breeding females, non-breeding offspring from previous years). Hoary marmots are active about four and a half months each year. When females reproduce, litter size averages three pups. Their home ranges are relatively large for marmots (they can be around 10 hectares!) and marmots may wander around much of it in a day. Like their close relatives, the Olympic marmot, they have four alarm calls. Hoary marmot calls can be similarly described by the difference between the starting and ending frequencies. Calls may be ascending, descending, or relatively flat. Hoary marmots also trill. A summary of hoary marmot alarm calling is available. Hoary marmots can be easily seen in Mt. Rainier National Park around both the Sunrise and Paradise Visitor Centers.



Photo: K.B. Armitage

[Return to The Marmot Burrow](#)



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT
501 NORTH GULKANA STREET
PALMER, ALASKA 99645

Phone: 907-746-9212 • Fax: 907-746-9292

January 27, 2009

Sen. Linda Menard
Room 9 Capital Building

RE: Letter of Support

Honorable Senator Menard,

I support your Bill for having Alaska recognize the marmot, rather than the ground hog, as the mascot for February 2. Across Alaska classrooms students recognize February 2 as the midpoint between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox also known as the halfway point between winter and spring. Calendars across the country identify the day as Groundhog's Day. For our Alaskan students the groundhog is not a familiar animal, whereas, the marmot is.

The same story that holds for the groundhog would surely play out for the marmot, too. If a marmot took a break from hibernation and walked outside his/her den on February 2 and did not see a shadow it would be a cloudy day which would probably be a warmer day than a sunny, high pressure midwinter day. Just as is true with the story of the ground hog, no shadow on a warm day for the marmot would presume a shorter winter ahead, but the bitter cold on the day the marmot sees his/her shadow would be the harbinger of winter to hang on longer.

This lesson on the calendar and earth rotation would assume more purpose with Alaskan students because of the familiar context of the marmot, while the ground hog has yet to experience witnessing the sun or a cloudy day in Alaska. I can only hope that our furry friend will enjoy a good South Central Alaska name like Matanuska Mike or Susitna Sally.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

George Troxel
Superintendent
Mat-Su Borough School District

Deena Paramo, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent Education
Mat-Su Borough School District



1/22/08

Sen. Linda Menard

State Capitol Room 9

Juneau, Alaska 99801

The Alaska Zoo supports the proposed "Marmot Day" bill. I think it would be a fun Alaskan version of groundhogs day and an opportunity to educate people on another species of Alaska's wildlife.

The Alaska Zoo currently does not have a marmot in residence, but we have had several in the past. It is on our wish list with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game should an orphaned or injured marmot come available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick S. Lampi".

Patrick S. Lampi

Executive Director

Alaska Zoo

Hoary Marmot

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



Basking behavior, Mount Rainier National Park

The **hoary marmot** (*Marmota caligata*) is a species of marmot that inhabits the mountains of northwest North America. The largest populations are in Alaska. In the northern part of that state they may live near sea level. Hoary marmots live near the tree line on slopes with grasses and forbs to eat and rocky areas for cover. It is the largest North American ground squirrel and is often

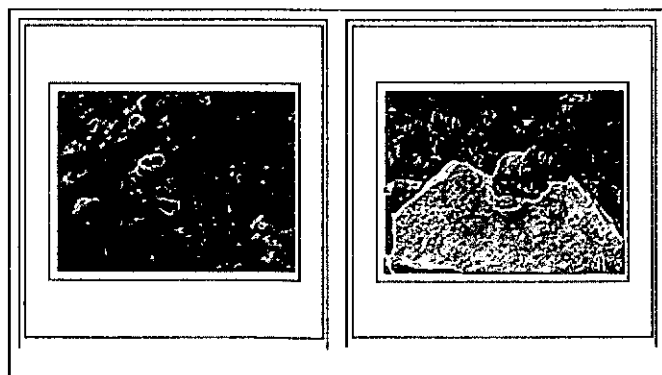
nicknamed "the whistler" for its high-pitched warning issued to alert other members of the colony to possible danger. The animals are sometimes called "whistle pigs." Whistler, British Columbia, originally London Mountain because of its heavy fogs and rain, was renamed for these animals to help make it more marketable as a resort. [2]

The "hoary" in their name refers to the silver-grey fur on their shoulders and upper back; the remainder of the upper parts are mainly covered in reddish brown fur. The underparts are greyish. They have a white patch on the muzzle and black feet and lower legs.


These animals hibernate 7 to 8 months a year in burrows that they excavate in the soil, often among or under boulders. Mating occurs after hibernation and 2 to 4 young are born in the spring. Males establish "harems," but may also visit females in other territories. Predators include golden eagles; grizzly and black bears; and wolves.

Unlike most animals their size, hoary marmots are not shy around humans. Rather than running away at first sight, they will often go about their business while being watched.

Gallery



Hoary Marmot



Conservation status

Extinct	Threatened					Least Concern
(EX)	(EW)	(CR)	(EN)	(VU)	(NT)	(LC)

Least Concern (IUCN 3.1)^[1]

Scientific classification

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Sciuridae

Genus: *Marmota*

Subgenus: *Petromarmota*

Species: *M. caligata*

Binomial name

Marmota caligata
(Eschscholtz, 1829)

Marmot Day

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Marmot Day is a community celebration in Owosso, Michigan, occurring on July 25th (or on the following Monday if the 25th falls on a weekend). It is a celebration of all marmots, which include groundhogs, woodchucks, and ground squirrels.

Confusion with Groundhog Day

Because groundhogs are also marmots, Groundhog Day (which occurs on February 2) has also been referred to as Marmot Day[1]. The Owosso celebration is a distinct event.

History of Marmot Day

Marmot Day was begun in 2002 in Owosso, Michigan, as a day of celebration for this animal which is usually considered as a pest. A luncheon is traditional as part of the celebration, and marmot jokes are also shared, among other festivities typical of any party or celebration. At 12:45 P.M., a marmot is positioned outside its hole, and if it goes into its hole, legend has it that summer is over; if it does not go into its hole, there will be one more month of summer.

Marmot Day 2009

On July 27, 2009 [2], Covenant Eyes, Inc. is hosting the community-wide celebration of Marmot Day. Festivities are from 11:00am to 2:00pm. Inevent includes marmot film finalist judging (\$1000 prize), marmot joke contest judging (\$50 prize). Main event is marmot deliberation at 12:45pm.

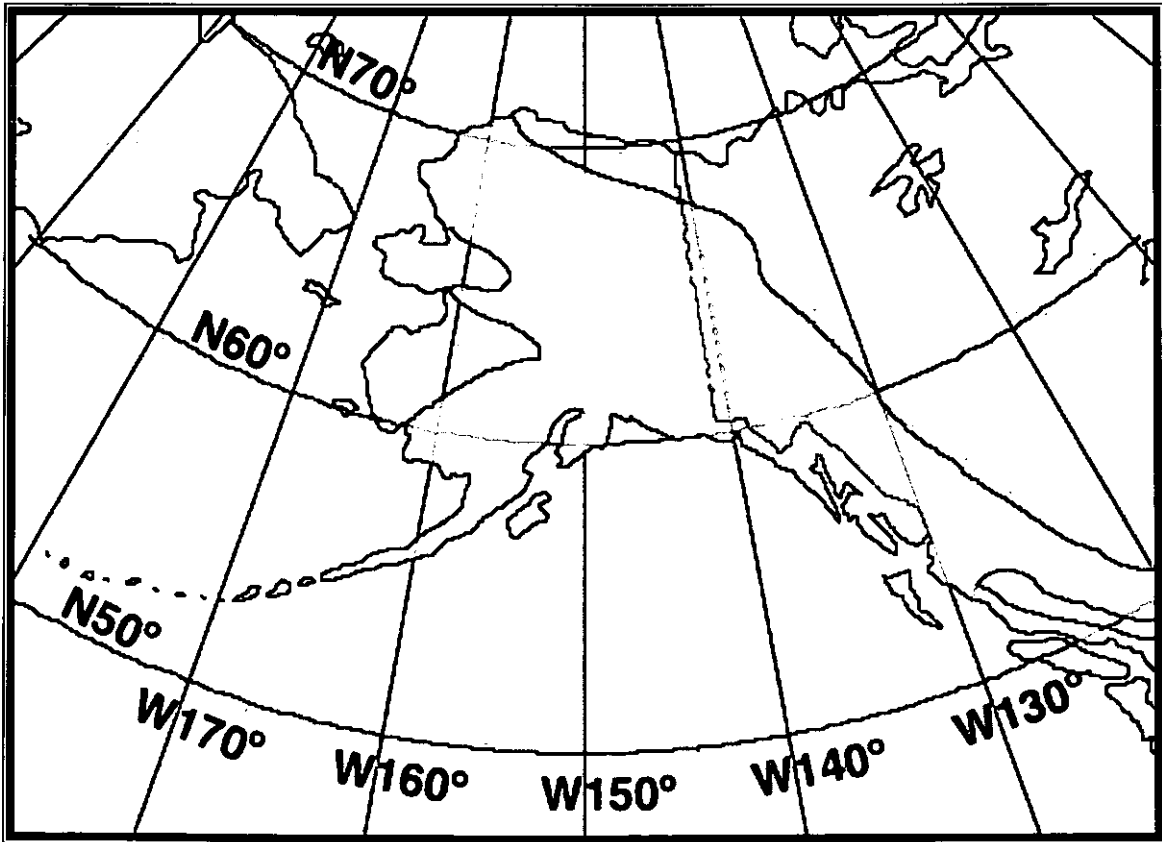
Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marmot_Day"

Hidden categories: Orphaned articles from February 2009 | All orphaned articles

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Territory of the Marmot



Menard mad about marmot

By BRIAN O'DONOGHUE

Frontierman staff

JUNEAU—A nefarious conspiracy is afoot among powerful members of the Legislature to deny a noble Alaskan its day in the sun.

Because of the conspiracy, Rep. Curt Menard said, next Tuesday the eyes of the nation will once again be drawn to a hole in Pennsylvania, instead of gazing with wonder at the Alaska Zoo.

"It's a disgrace to tourism," the representative declared, over the phone from the state capital this week.

Menard's anguish stems from

the Byzantine political fate of House Bill 181, his bold legislation to replace Groundhog Day with an occasion honoring an official state marmot.

House speaker Ben Grussendorf confirmed Menard's dire forecast.

"I don't think we're going to see the marmot's shadow out of committee and onto the floor by the time Groundhog Day rolls around," the speaker said.

Though he originally banished the bill to four committees, Grussendorf denied he is part of a crusade to deny marmots their due.

(Please see Marmot Back Page)



Marmot

(Continued from Front Page)

"I look at what we call local hire, or Alaska preference, and the marmot may well serve that purpose," he said. "I've no personal preference on it. If the bill comes out of committee it's fine with me."

Marmots living this far north are seldom seen this time of year, according to Alaska Zoo director Fammye Seawell. However, Smoke Alarm, the Zoo's senior hoary marmot, is apparently an exception.

"Every few weeks Smoke Alarm sticks his nose out," the zoo director said.

Groundskeepers say Smoke Alarm's restlessness is a matter of personal hygiene. In the halls of the Statehouse, however, the consensus holds the furry weathervane is actually sniffing out the political situation.

Pressed to explain the legislative logjam, Grussendorf shook his head.

"There's no leverage in the Marmot Bill," he said.

Nonetheless, this much is clear: Rep. John Sund is holding official recognition for Smoke Alarm hostage in his Judiciary Committee.

"We call it the dark hole," Menard said. "There's not a whole lot that comes out of that committee. I've talked to John a couple of times about moving it. But he's not too big on the poor little critter."

So, I don't think the marmot's going to stick its head out of the hole," Menard said, chuckling. "I think the speaker's right."

A lot of ribbing goes on about the Marmot Bill, but Menard said he takes it in stride.

"A lot of them are saying it's a joke thing, but there's a long-term value in terms of tourism. I thought it would give some promotion to the zoo. There's a town in Penn. where the official Groundhog lives. They built a big tourist industry on that critter alone, selling shirts and all kinds of knickknacks. People go there for souvenirs.

"We always say we're different," he added. "If we're going to be different we don't have to drag all these traditional things up from the Lower 48."

Marmot Day: This is especially beneficial to the valley. Our community is saddled with a lot of embarrassing stereotypes (meth capitol of the state, etc.), which cause young people especially to be disrespectful of our community. Marmots are local and have been here all along; recognizing their value with Marmot Day shows that we in the Valley have some local pride. Without that, it's impossible to maintain a sense of community identity.

Growing up in the Valley, I knew that our strip malls and box stores were nothing special. Independence Mine at Hatcher Pass, populated by marmots, is special. Marmot Day draws attention to the rich cultural resources preserved at Independence Mine and throughout the Talkeetna Mountains. The more we can do to imbue our community with a depth of history, the more the Mat-Su becomes somewhere we can be proud to live. I have watched the most talented members of my high school class leave the Valley with no plans of returning. Things like Marmot Day may be insignificant alone, but when we connect them together, they represent something important. The act of valuing local aspects like gold mines and marmots, or the Palmer Hay Flats and waterfowl, gives my generation a reason to stay-- or to come home again

-Will Elliot, Wasilla



Jamie Rodriguez

FAX COVER PAGE

TO: Senator Linda Menard

DATE: March 2, 2009

PAGES: 9 *(including this page)*

COMMENTS:

Hello Senator Menard,

Enclosed are eight student letters in support of SB58. I'm sorry that I couldn't get more. It was very short notice and Mondays are our most hectic day of the week with very little extra class time. Hopefully this will help your cause.

My students loved hearing about your Marmot bill. I found your map on the internet and they were amazed at the vast range of this furry little creature!

Good luck on Tuesday!

Jamie Rodriguez

P. 7
Jasmine Riski
801 Valley St.
Anchorage, AK
99504

Dear Senator Menard,

I am willing to support SB58 for naming February 2 "Marmot day" in Alaska for three reasons. First, because it's a special day for Alaska to have fun. Second, because Alaska does not have Ground Hogs; we have Marmots. Last but not least, because Alaska will be the only state in the US that has Marmot day. Obviously I hope that Ground Hog Day gets changed to Marmot Day.

Sincerely,
Jasmine Riski

P.S.
6801 Potter
Highway Dr.
Anchorage, AK
99516.

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing to support SB58. I have been going to Arctic Valley my whole life and they celebrate "Merry Marmot Day". On that day a group of people arrange a bunch of activities and contests for the kids. Also we don't have Ground Hogs in Alaska. Anybody can see that this bill should be passed because it would give Alaskans a special day to celebrate.

Sincerely,

Raia Stamm

Joey Aist
4700 Mansie
Anchorage AK
March 2 2009

Dear Senator Menard

I support SB 58 for these reasons. First, groundhogs don't even live in Alaska, but marmots live all over Alaska. Second, marmots are equivalent to groundhogs. Third, a lot of people in Alaska appreciate and like the marmot. Clearly marmots are Alaska's groundhogs, so a day to honor them makes sense.

Sincerely,
Joey Aist

P. 2
10041 Hanley Cir.
Anchorage, AK 99507
March 2nd 2009

Dear Senator Menard,

I am writing in support of SB 58. Every year during the spring the Arctic Valley Ski Area hosts a "Merry Marmot Festival" and has many fun activities honoring the Marmot. During the festival many people come to celebrate the Marmot, so why not make it official? The Marmot is very similar to the Groundhog, only Marmots live in Alaska and Groundhogs do not. Having February 2nd be Marmot Day would give Alaska another very unique quality.

Sincerely,
Ms. Ryan Terry

UnPj^B
3236 US 6th St
Anchorage 99502
March 2, 2009

Dear Senator Menard,

I support SB58 to have a "Merry Marmot Day", every February 2nd. We should have a "Merry Marmot Day", instead of Ground Hogs' Day because, the Marmot is Alaska's Ground Hog. The kind of Marmot here is the Hoary Marmot. The Marmot lives here, and the Ground Hog doesn't so why does the Ground Hog get a special day? As you can see the Marmot deserves their own special day.

Sincerely,
Calena B. Shafer

5070 Valley Brook Cir
Anchorage, AK 99507

March 2, 2009

Dear Senator Menard,

I am writing to support SB58. We should have a Marmot day because it would add to the uniqueness of Alaska. Also, we would be able to celebrate a cute, furry mammal, and many people love cute and furry mammals. One more thing is that marmots are afraid of their shadows, like groundhogs, so we will still be able to tell how much longer winter will last, instead of doing something else. All in All, Marmots are the groundhogs of Alaska, so a special day for them makes sense.

Sincerely,
Yungshu Wong

P. 5
240 FCHSKU
ANCHORAGE,
AK 99515

Dear Senator Memard,

I support your bill and have agreed that the marmot day is a great day to have for Alaska. We need our own special day, like the other states have.

Marmots are cute, kind, and gentle. They help keep Alaska beautiful.

So I believe that the marmot would be a great day for Alaskans.

Sincerely
Maddie Flores

P. 9
3147
anch. 9 K
March 2, 2009

Dear Senator Menard,

I support S.B. 52. Marmot Day is a good idea because it would be interesting to have a unique animal to celebrate. Second of all, Ground Hogs don't even live here, marmots do. Finally, we should choose an animal that lives here unlike Ground Hogs. To sum it all up, the marmot deserves to have its special day.

Sincerely,
Ciara Brady

SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT
First Committee of Referral

DATE: 1/21/09

FURTHER: Resources

Date of 5-Day Notice: 2/25/09
 (in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED
 IN TO OFFICE: 3/3/09

State Affairs Committee considered SENATE BILL NO. 58

SB 58 MARMOT DAY

"An Act establishing February 2 of each year as Marmot Day; and providing for an effective date."

and recommends:

- be replaced with SCS or CS _____ (_____)
- adopt previous SCS or CS _____ (_____)
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt _____ Letter of Intent
- further referral to _____ Committee

SENATE BILL:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Same Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Title
<hr/>	
HOUSE BILL:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Same Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	Technical Title Change
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Title w/ SCR # _____

NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):

Department	Date	Fiscal	Indet	Zero	FN#
GOV/ALL	3/2/09			✓	1

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S):

Department	Date	Fiscal	Indet	Zero	FN#

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	PRINTED LAST NAME	DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
<i>[Signature]</i>	French	X			
<i>[Signature]</i>	KODKESH	X			
<i>[Signature]</i>	PASKVAN	X			
Vice-CHAIR: <i>[Signature]</i>	Meyer	X			

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2009 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: ①
 Bill Version: SB 58
 () Publish Date: 3/3/09

Identifier (file name): HB019-GOV-OMB-3-02-09 Dept. Affected: All
 Title: Establishing February 2 as Marmot Day RDU: _____
 Component: _____
 Sponsor: Sen. Menard Component Number: _____
 Requester: Senate State Affairs Committee

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

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

	Appropriation Required	Information						
		FY 2010	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
OPERATING EXPENDITURES								
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	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 Interagency Receipts								
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2009) cost: _____

POSITIONS

Full-time								
Part-time								
Temporary								

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

After burrowing into the details of this legislation, we have determined that the bill will not have a significant fiscal impact on any State agency.

Prepared by: Jack Kreinheder, Senior Analyst Phone 465-4676
 Division: Office of Management and Budget Date/Time 3/2/09 11:45 AM
 Approved by: Karen Rehfeld, Director Date 3/2/2009
Office of Management and Budget