



**Alaska State
Legislature**
House and Senate
Democrats

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Crawford Bill Beefs Up Open Meetings Law
'The public has a right to know what lawmakers are discussing'

Representative Harry Crawford (D-Anchorage) introduced a bill Wednesday to strengthen the state's open meetings law. House Bill 72 changes the rules for closing a meeting. It also outlaws the use of pledged votes, on so-called chit sheets, in scheduling bills for the floor.

State law currently permits legislators to conduct closed caucus meetings to discuss political strategy. House Bill 72 requires caucus meetings to start in the open. They could be closed only by a majority vote.

"Just because the current guidelines allow it, doesn't make it right," Representative Crawford said. "The public has a right to know what lawmakers are discussing."

In order for a bill to be heard on the floor, the House and Senate Rules Committees require legislators to submit a written tally, or chit sheet, of colleagues who promise to vote in favor of the measure. HB 72 seeks to end this practice, because it binds legislators to vote in favor of the measure before hearing a full debate or reviewing any proposed amendments.

"A bill should pass or fail on the floor because of its merits," said Representative Crawford, "not because of deals and promises made between legislators behind closed doors."

Representative Crawford has submitted a hearing request for HB 72 to the House State Affairs Committee.

He spoke from Anchorage where he is with his wife, Gwen Perry-Crawford, who is recovering from injuries sustained when she was struck by an alleged drunken driver on December 24.

"Though I need to be with Gwen at this time, I'm still actively engaged in the legislative process," Representative Crawford said.

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·  http://www.akdemocrats.org/Documents/011305_crawford_open_meetings_law.pdf

· **Additional information:** [HB72 Representative Harry Crawford](#)

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