



# Donny's Legislative Report

## Senator Donald C. Olson

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## Senator Olson's Proposed Legislation for the 23rd Alaska State Legislature

### SB 43: Extend State Medical Board

I have introduced four pieces of legislation so far this year. Three of them I hope to see enacted during this session. **SB 43** would extend the termination date for the State Medical Board for another 8 years. The termination date is called a sunset provision that forces the legislature to periodically review and assess the board's performance. I think it is important for the board to continue its work, particularly the licensing function. This is especially important for rural Alaska where health care facilities and services are growing dramatically. I am also pleased with presence of a Physician's Assistant on the board. I feel that the PA perspective on rural health care is an important contribution to the board's deliberations.

### SB 44: Oil Spill Response Costs

I introduced **SB 44** in response to concerns that in certain circumstances the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) needed to have more flexibility in the recovery of the state's actual costs in oil spill containment and cleanup activities. Current statutes (AS 46.04.010 and AS 46.08.070) require DEC to promptly seek reimbursement for the state's oil spill response costs from the persons or entities that caused or are liable for the spill. The statutes do not allow for the department to adjust or waive the reimbursement requirement in those situations where the costs far exceed the financial resources of the individual or entity responsible. As a result financial constraints could be imposed on a small community or individual, which could cause severe social impacts that counteract essential local government programs.

The oil spill suffered by the village of Little Diomedé is a specific case in point. The village inadvertently had a broken pipe fitting between pumps and was unaware of the spillage until the snowdrift melted in early spring. The oil spill recovery costs were extremely expensive. With **SB 44**, a process will be established for DEC to consider reducing or waiving oil spill clean-up costs in special circumstances such as Little Diomedé.

### SB 54: Overtime Pay for Airline Employees

**SB 54** is a bill I introduced on behalf of the Air Carriers Association to sustain the existing statutory basis for determining flight crew pay schedules. A recent court decision introduced some uncertainty about the current interpretation of state law that exempts flight crews from the overtime requirements of a standard 8 hour day, 40 hour week. Both federal and state exemptions have allowed flight crews to be paid on a basis more fitting and appropriate to their work schedule and work conditions. **SB 54** explicitly provides the exemption thus resolving the court's uncertainty. I am certain that the imposition of the 8 hour day, 40 week standard would severely affect the smaller commuter airlines and hence the costs of their services to the traveling public.

### SB 57: Appropriation of Arctic Winter Games

I introduced **SB 57** to bring attention to the value and popularity of the Arctic Winter Games. The bill is a special appropriation of \$200,000 for the expense of taking Team Alaska to Ft. McMurray, Alberta, Canada this next winter. Typically, 350 Alaskan athletes and coaches from all parts of the state participate in these games with our Arctic neighbors. Usually, a special appropriation doesn't pass by itself but is incorporated in one of the large appropriation bills. Seven other senators that I asked from both urban and rural areas agreed to co-sponsor the bill to further show support for this important event. My main effort now will be to work in the finance committee to ensure that the funding gets included.