



Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

WEB: <http://www.akdemocrats.org>
CONTACT: Rep. Les Gara
PHONE: (888) 465-2647 or 465-2647
FAX: (907) 465-3518
EMAIL: rep.les.gara@legis.state.ak.us

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House Passes Consumer Protection Bill

JUNEAU – Today the House passed HB 56, a bill that will give the state greater power to fight consumer fraud. This bill, sponsored by Representative Les Gara (D-Anchorage), strengthens the state's ability to represent Alaskans who have been victimized by fraudulent business practices, whether by used car dealers, telemarketers, or others who prey on Alaska's consumers. It does so while actually saving the state money. The bill implements a policy that Senator Fred Dyson and Representative Eric Croft attempted in 1997.

Currently victims of consumer fraud can contact the State's Attorney General's Office for help. However, due to budget constraints, the State cannot help many such victims. In 2001 roughly half of all Alaskans who complained of consumer law violations were turned away due to budget constraints.

HB 56 changes the law to allow the state to recover its full enforcement, investigation and court costs if it prevails against a party that has violated Alaska's consumer protection laws.

The public policies behind this bill are simple: Those who engage in unfair business practices should not force the state to bear the costs of their misconduct. Moreover, by allowing the state to recover not only the existing penalties that are available under state law, but its enforcement costs, the law will help fund a more vibrant, more cost-effective consumer protection presence in Alaska.

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