



Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

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Avalanche Awareness Resolution Passes House

JUNEAU – The Alaska State House of Representatives this morning unanimously passed House Joint Resolution 41, a resolution sponsored by Representative Beth Kerttula (D-Juneau) to support efforts by U.S. Senator Ted Stevens to implement a federal program that would provide needed funding for avalanche safety education, forecasting, detection, research and control.

“Alaska has the highest avalanche death rate in the nation, but very little funding for education, prevention, and control,” said Representative Kerttula. “This legislature has shown its commitment to avalanche awareness, but we need to do more. Sending this resolution will let the U.S. Senate know that funding for avalanche safety efforts is a priority for Alaskans.”

HJR 41 supports Sen. Ted Stevens S. 931, which directs the Secretary of Interior to establish an avalanche protection program in the National Park System – there are 54 million acres of national parks in Alaska. It also provides money in the form of grants for avalanche danger identification, forecasting, detecting, mitigation, research and control (including munitions). These grants would be available to a wide variety of programs, including private industry, communities, and transportation entities, not just government programs. Grants are not restricted to the National Park system. Alaska will get a large share of the available grant money.

S 931 is sitting in the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and has not had a hearing.

“Alaska loses more people to avalanches than any other state, regardless of population, yet we are the one state with no federally funded statewide program to reduce that death toll,” said Bill Glude, Director of the Southeast Alaska Avalanche Center. “Passage of this resolution and the federal legislation will be a tremendous help to the Alaskan non-profit groups dedicated to avalanche education. We are all very pleased to see the resolution pass today.”

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Sen. Bettye Davis, Sen. Johnny Ellis, Sen. Kim Elton, Sen. Lyman Hoffman, Sen. Hollis French, Sen. Gretchen Guess, Sen. Georgianna Lincoln, Sen. Donny Olson, Rep. Ethan Berkowitz, Rep. Sharon Cissna, Rep. Harry Crawford, Rep. Eric Croft, Rep. Les Gara, Rep. Max Gruenberg, Rep. David Guttenberg, Rep. Reggie Joule, Rep. Mary Kapsner, Rep. Beth Kerttula, Rep. Albert Kookesh, Rep. Carl Moses