



Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

WEB: <http://www.akdemocrats.org>
CONTACT: Jordan Marshall, Press Secretary
PHONE: (907) 269-0133 or 321-3682
FAX: (907) 465-5125
EMAIL: press@akdemocrats.org

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Berkowitz Challenges Murkowski Over Appointment

Transparency and Accountability Needed in Senate Appointment Process

ANCHORAGE – House Democratic Leader Ethan Berkowitz (D-Anchorage) today criticized Governor Frank Murkowski for failing to provide transparency and accountability in appointing Charlie Huggins to fill Sen. Scott Ogan's vacant seat. While Berkowitz offered Mr. Huggins congratulations, he pointed out that the public has a right to participate in the selection of its elected officials and that Murkowski has a history of bad judgment and bad process when it comes to making appointments.*

Murkowski recently attempted to make an issue of transparency and accountability in judicial appointments. In order that those concerns not be considered either hypocritical or cynical, Murkowski should explain why he conducted his interviews in secret behind closed doors and shut the general public out of the process to fill legislative vacancies.

Murkowski neither articulated his standards for making his choice, nor did he sponsor public hearings to give the people a chance to get answers to issues of concern. Given that Randy Ruedrich, whose ethical failings surrounding coal bed methane have been well documented, figured prominently in forwarding the list of names to Governor Murkowski, the public has reason for skepticism.

Berkowitz said that this appointment highlights the need to make changes to the governor's appointment powers.

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* Murkowski has appointed 10 percent of the Legislature.

Taken from office:

Rep. Lisa Murkowski
Sen. Alan Austerman
Rep. Gary Stevens
Sen. Robin Taylor
Rep. Jim Whitaker (resigned)
Sen. Scott Ogan (resigned)

Replaced by:

Nancy Dahlstrom
Rep. Gary Stevens
Dan Ogg
Bert Stedman (Jim Elkins)
Nick Stepovich
Charlie Huggins

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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