



# The Berkowitz Bulletin

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT — SUMMER 2000

### Dear Neighbor,

Churchill once said that democracy is the worst form of government – except for all the others. This legislative session bore out that observation. After the usual mix of squandered opportunities, triumphs, and noisy chicanery, this legislature managed to leave the state relatively unscathed. Clearly, Alaska deserves more from the legislature than it leave Juneau without inflicting any harm on the state. It is time to raise expectations.

#### Inaction on Issues

The three issues that defined 1999 barely received consideration in 2000.

In spite of the efforts of several legislators, attempts to craft a long range fiscal plan for the state foundered in the wake of both the Permanent Fund vote and the current spike in oil prices.

In late September of last year, the House of Representatives tried to put a subsistence amendment on the ballot, but a group of eight Republican Senators prevented that initiative from reaching voters and, as a result, the federal government took control of Alaska's fish and game management on October 1.

Finally, the BP-ARCO merger became the BP-Phillips deal without any meaningful participation from the legislature.

#### Some Progress

Triumphs came primarily in three areas. First, the University received the additional support needed to make it a more vital part of Alaska's educational and economic landscape.

Second, the legislature ratified and funded the employee contracts, which will keep the state



*Rep. Berkowitz discusses legislation with Gov. Knowles. The Governor's dog, Shadow (in the foreground), listens with her usual rapt attention.*

open and ready for business this year.

Third, Power Cost Equalization (PCE) received long-term funding, which should encourage economic development in areas of the state that suffer from power costs up to six times of those in Anchorage.

#### Other Issues

Finally, there was a great deal of squawking as the majority put forward a

constitutional amendment to limit the ability of the public to offer initiatives relating to wildlife management. Although the reason for that bit of legislation was "the impact of Outside money" on Alaskan elections, efforts to create meaningful campaign reform went nowhere. In a further bit of irony, the same majority that opted to permit same-day aerial hunting rejected same-day voter registration.

#### What's Next

I draw a lesson from this session. In order to solve the state's problems, we must move past simple slogans and into substantive debate. We need now to figure a vision for the state, one that focuses more on what we want Alaska to look like in the future. I encourage all Alaskans to participate in the decisions on how to spend wisely – what investments are necessary for education, for infrastructure, and for public safety - and how to secure the revenues to do so. Every perspective is important and every voice counts so, as we enter the campaign season, I encourage everyone to engage in political debate based on reason and civility.

This is an exciting time to serve in the legislature, and I am grateful that you gave me the opportunity to do so - I remain optimistic about our future. I hope you have a great summer and please let me know if I can be of any assistance.

#### How to keep in touch

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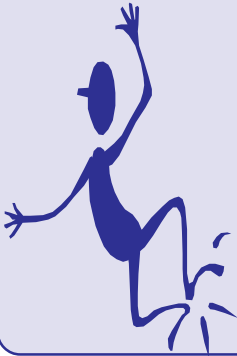
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## Summer Solstice celebration

Alaskans love summer solstice, when long nights and warm sunshine result in celebrations all over the state. One of my favorite events is the AWAIC Summer Solstice Festival in the Town Square Park downtown.

Live music, crafts, food, and seeing neighbors are just part of the fun.



This year, the event takes place on Friday, June 16th and Saturday, June 17th from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. each day. If you would like to volunteer or get more information, contact AWAIC at 279-9581.

## Toll Fellow

Last year I received a special honor when selected as a Henry Toll Fellow. The Toll Fellowship, sponsored through the Council of State Governments, brings together leaders from across the country for training in economics, communications and demography.

Unfortunately, last fall's special session on subsistence prevented me from attending. Luckily, I was invited to go back this year.

Previous Alaskans chosen as Toll Fellows include Fran Ulmer, Mike Navarre, Steve McAlpine, Stephanie Cole, Tom Brice, Bettye Davis, Kay Brown, Michelle Brown, Mark Boyer, and Sean Parnell.

## Rep. Berkowitz's Bills 2000

*Some legislation I sponsored and co-sponsored last session*

- **HB 9 - Filing of Settlement Information.** Allows collection of settlement information in civil litigation cases to assess the costs and benefits of tort reform (passed).
- **HB 29 - Contraceptive Coverage.** Broadens the range of contraceptive options available to Alaskan families through their insurance plans (did not pass).
- **HB 31 - UAA Consortium Library.** Provides funding for the new UAA library (funded as part of this year's bond package).
- **HB 215 - Renters Rebate for Seniors and Disabled Veterans.** Seeks to reinstate a program similar to the Property Tax Exemption for senior renters (did not pass).
- **HB 346 - Services for Disabled Persons.** Provides more useful information about the availability of resources for disabled persons on waiting lists (passed).
- **HB 372 - Community Based Sentencing.** Promotes Restorative Justice, which stresses accountability for the offender, restitution for the victim, and reconciliation for the community (passed).
- **HB 396 - Student Loan Corporation; Municipal Bond Bank; AHFC.** Consolidates financial functions performed by the state (did not pass - but I will try again!).
- **SJR 18 - Exxon Valdez Damage Claims.** Encourages ExxonMobil to pay the jury award stemming from the Exxon Valdez oil spill (passed).

**For a complete list of bills I sponsored and information about them,  
log on to my web site at: <http://www.akdemocrats.org/bios/berklegis.htm>**

## Meet Mara

Whoever said that knocking on doors is an important part of Alaskan politics only got it half right. That's how I met my wife! During the last campaign I discovered a constituent who has since become, as Mike Doogan says, "the woman who lets me live with her."

Mara Kimmel is a lawyer who works for Catholic Social Services. She graduated to Anchorage after spending many years in Fairbanks, where she worked in resource management.



### ***District 13 Capital Budget Projects***

#### **ANCHORAGE PIONEERS' HOME**

Ventilation and Humidification System Repair & Upgrade

#### **ANCHORAGE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

FAA Noise Compatibility Program Implementation

General Aviation Improvements

17 other various projects

#### **PARKS & RECREATION**

Ship Creek Trail - Phases 1 & 2

Areawide Trails Rehabilitation

Sport Fishing and Recreational Boating Public Access & Facility Development

#### **SCHOOLS/UNIVERSITY**

State Matching Monies for Anchorage School Bonds

UAA Consortium Library

#### **MUNICIPAL PROJECTS**

Ship Creek Redevelopment and Port Access Planning  
Anchorage Water, Wastewater, & Water Quality Projects

## **District Thirteen's Top Ten**

*The top ten reasons you  
contacted me during the  
legislative session*

10. Anchorage International  
Airport Issues
9. BP-ARCO Merger
8. Permanent Fund Dividend
7. The Budget Debate
6. Employee Contracts
5. Aerial Predator Control
4. Tobacco Prevention Funds
3. The Mackie Plan
2. Renter's Rebate for Seniors

*...and the number one  
reason you contacted me  
in Juneau...*

### **1. Funding for University of Alaska**

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## **Airport Updates**

At the beginning of July the new departure ramp is scheduled to open at Anchorage International Airport, but construction will continue for quite a while. Keep up with the latest developments by checking the web at:

<http://www.aiaterminalproject.com>

You can also call my office at 269-0130 or the project manager's office at 266-2565 for more information.



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**Have a great  
summer !**

Paid for by Ethan Berkowitz—  
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## EB at the Helm

As the House Minority Leader, I welcome experience that helps me navigate the tricky shoals of Juneau.

When the opportunity to ride a double-hulled tanker carrying Alaska North Slope crude oil from Prince William Sound to points south came up, it seemed just the ticket. My colleague from Valdez, Rep. John Harris, and I sailed aboard the SS Kenai and learned a great deal about the tanker trade.

Captain Mark Sizemore offered me the chance to steer the ship. I did not even come close to hitting anything, which made me realize that the legislature would do well to install some of these navigational aids.

## *Subscribe to Ethan On-line*

If you have e-mail, let me know and I'll send you regular electronic updates of the Berkowitz Bulletin. E-mail me at:

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