

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

## SPONSOR STATEMENT

### **HB 370: Empowers local communities and protects Alaska's waters in the development of Coal Bed Methane Resources.**

HB 370 permits local communities to regulate coal bed methane development under their zoning laws to the fullest extent allowable under the Alaska Constitution. That has been an issue of great importance for citizens and local governments as Alaska's law in this area has been discussed this past year.

HB 370 also does two other things to protect the rights of local citizens, as well as of fishermen and those who enjoy Alaska's outdoors. It provides that coal bed methane activities must be conducted in a manner that protects the water quality of our fishing streams and drinking water. It also provides that the Department of Natural Resources shall not allow activities that interfere with public access to fishing streams.

Currently exploration has been proposed near two trophy salmon and trout streams, Willow Creek and Sheep Creek (in spawning and rearing areas where trout and grayling fishing is open, but salmon fishing is closed), in the Mat-Su Valley. The access and habitat protection measures will ensure that development will be conducted in a way that protects Alaska's fishing streams and drinking water from degradation due to salinization or mineral or fuel contamination.