

# Colletta's alcoholism committee reports public input, is ready to offer legislative package to counter Hammond

The Special Interim Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse has completed its activities and is prepared to offer a series of bills for legislative consideration, according to the chairman, Sen. Mike Colletta of Anchorage.

It is important to note that while there will be a number of legislative recommendations as a result of activities by the Special Senate Committee, these items for consideration are, in fact, a direct expression of the people of Alaska of suggestions they have made to the committee of things they want accomplished.

The different approach adopted by the committee in conducting public hearings and soliciting public comment has produced a massive outpouring of participation and consensus of opinion by an unusually large number of citizens. The committee asked the people of Alaska to write a legislative bill as they thought it should be written. The responses received have been carefully evaluated and are being translated into legislative language.

Since the people's ideas for a legislative bill covered such a wide area of public law, a series of bills were necessary to express them all.

Following is a summary of those items the public wants enacted into law:

- Primary alcoholism education curriculum in the public school system, grades K through 12;

- Basic alcoholism education and in-service type training for persons with a main-line contact with alcoholics; police officials, judges, social workers, doctors, nurses, village health aides, etc.;

- Accredited alcoholism training for state certified teachers;

- Training for persons dispensing alcohol;

- Provision for a statewide alcoholism education and training resource center to provide coordination,

education materials, and training for local programs to draw upon;

- Specialized training for coordination and joint operations in liquor law enforcement by Alcoholic Beverage Control Board and other police agencies;

- Increased penalties for all convictions involving alcohol and a motor vehicle;

- Licensing of bartenders, cocktail waitresses and others who dispense alcoholic beverages;

- Increase Alcoholic Beverage Control Board personnel with a particular emphasis on patrolmen and investigators;

- Require that no more than one liquor beverage is to be served to a single patron at a time;

- Establish strict guidelines for the sale of alcohol beverages by telephone or mail order;

- Mandatory alcoholism counseling referrals by judges whenever an individual becomes involved in the judicial process and alcohol is a contributing factor;

- Series of detoxification centers utilizing local hospitals as much as possible;

- Establish guidelines and criteria for para-professionals in outlying areas and enable non-profit health corporations to act as primary contractors for providing alcoholism services in rural areas;

- Make available low interest loans to community corporations similar, to other special areas such as economic development, minorities, veterans and student loans. This low interest loan would be for design and construction of recreation, sports, or adult social gathering places with the condition that alcohol would be prohibited in the facility;

- Establish uniform certification procedures for local alcoholism programs providing for a maximum of local self-determination in the structure and the method of operations and objectives;

- Require certification of alcoholism programs;

- Encourage development of third party funding sources such as veterans administration, employer participation and insurance coverage;

- Authorize tax credit for contributions to certified alcoholism programs similar to political deductions;

- Eliminate annual grant application requirements for alcoholism programs and provide for longer periods of funding;

- Establish "program revenue sharing" for local communities with funding based upon need.

"Throughout the life of the Special Senate Committee, the public comment was consistent and clear. The problems of alcoholism and alcohol abuse have reached crisis proportions and the time has come to do something about it. We were told the current approaches to alcoholism are not working and a new emphasis is needed," Colletta said.

"To accomplish this we are proposing a re-direction for alcoholism program funding. All monies now collected by the state from alcohol related industry will be available for this new local program approach. By re-directing revenue currently being raised, together with excise tax legislation now awaiting action in the State House, costly duplication and competition by different state agencies and administrative overhead would be reduced. Current grant program funding to alcoholism programs now total approximately \$3 million. Under the revenue sharing proposal, approximately \$12 million would be made available directly to local communities for alcoholism programs," Colletta added.

During the course of the committee's activities, there were a total of 36 public meetings conducted in 31 communities throughout Alaska. Written comments were returned by over 400 people with specific suggestions for a new law.