

On RATNET Senate passes bill to ban alcohol ads

by Alexandra J. McClanahan
Tundra Times publisher

Alcohol advertisements would be banned from the Rural Alaska Television Network under a bill passed Friday in the Alaska Senate on a 13-6 vote, with one not voting.

The bill, introduced by Sen. John Binkley, R-Bethel, would prohibit all advertising of alcohol products on RATNET, effective April 15, 1991.

The next step is consideration in the House, where it will be assigned to one or more House committees before being discussed by the full body. In the Senate, the bill was passed earlier by both the Labor and Commerce Committee, as well as the Finance Committee.

Voting against passage of the bill Thursday were Sens. Al Adams, D-Kotzebue, Drue Pearce, R-Anchorage, Mike Szymanski, D-Anchorage, Jack Coghill, R-Nenana, Lloyd Jones, R-Ketchikan, and Tim Kelly, R-Anchorage. Not voting was Sen. Bettye Fahrenkamp, D-Fairbanks.

Binkley said that the bill is needed because having advertisements for alcoholic products on a state-sponsored television network sends the

continued on page nine

• Bill would ban alcohol ads

continued from page one

wrong message to rural Alaska, where many villages have voted to restrict or ban alcoholic products.

"For me, I felt that it's a contradiction," he said.

The bill has been criticized in some quarters because people have said they fear they won't be allowed to watch programming they really enjoy, such as sports events.

"I don't anticipate it will eliminate those programs," Binkley said. He noted that his reason for setting the effective date as a year from now was to give officials time to negotiate with major networks and advertisers.

Binkley said he will appeal to their

"moral conscience" and attempt to show them it's not in their best interest to promote consumption and sale of alcohol in rural Alaska.

Also, he said if the negotiations are successful, the bill would have the advantage of allowing local advertisements to be inserted into the national programming.

If the negotiations fail, however, Binkley said the one-year period will also allow for continuation of programming.

"If we're not successful, then we'd have the opportunity to change the law," he said. "Passing this law makes a positive statement and puts pressure on us to get it done."