

Alcohol advisory committee seeks comments

The Alaska Supreme Court's Alcohol local option advisory committee is seeking comments from across the state on what fines should be collected when the new law is violated.

The law, which takes effect Sept. 3, will enable any community to hold local option elections to decide whether to ban possession of alcohol in the community. This new option will be added to the four choices in the existing local option law.

Under the old law, communities had the choice of banning sales and importation of alcohol, banning sales only, allowing alcohol sales in a community owned store only or allowing a liquor license.

Violations of existing law are considered misdemeanor or felony criminal cases.

Under the new law, if a community chooses to ban the possession of alcohol, the violators will not be charged with a crime. Instead, their alcohol will be confiscated by an officer, and the person will be issued a citation.

Violators are subject to a non-criminal fine of up to \$1,000. The fine must be paid within 30 days. Violators could have the option of performing community service at a rate of one hour for each \$5 fine.

Failure to pay the bail or perform community service would result in a

mandatory court appearance.

The committee is considering three different types of bail schedule. One is based on the amount of alcohol in possession with fines increasing accordingly. Also fines would increase according to the number of violations.

Another option is two basic fines, depending on the amount of alcohol, and a third choice would allow a standard fine regardless of the amount confiscated or the number of violations.

Since the law takes effect on Wednesday, the members of the committee are requesting comments be received by no later than Sept. 15.

People interested in commenting are urged to contact the committee.

Members and their phone numbers are: Chairperson, Superior Court Judge Michael Jeffery of Barrow, 852-4800; Magistrates Geoffrey Comfort of Dillingham, 842-5215, Elizabeth Dennis of Craig, 826-3306, James Jackson of Galena, 656-1322, Dorothy Sundown-Alder of Scammon Bay, 558-5427; Assistant Public Defender, Donald Surgeon of Bethel, 543-2488; and District Attorney John Vacek of Nome, 443-2296.

Written comments may be sent to any committee member or Judge Jeffery at Post Office Box 2700, Barrow 99723.