

Senator Hohman announces internship program for youth

By LAURY ROBERTS

A new Legislative internship project will enable the state to get "more bang for its bucks" — about a half a million worth — now spent annually on temporary legislative help, according to Bethel Democrat Sen. George Hohman.

Hohman, flanked by a half a dozen staffers and consultants, announced the program last week during a Juneau press session, which was teleconferenced to reporters in Anchorage and Fairbanks.

He is establishing the

classroom and on-the-job training program through his expansive powers as chairperson of the Legislative Council which allots money for the internal operation of the legislature.

The project will also tie into a long ignored statute which encourages high school seniors to visit the capital, and a bill sponsored last spring by Sen. Pat Rodey (D-Anchorage) mandating a student internship program. However, Hohman said he does "not feel constrained to stay within the language" of Rodey's

measure and that the training will be a "free floating" entity.

Twenty-five slots are open for persons interested in attending training beginning in September in Juneau. Classes will run through December and include rudiments of conducting research, drafting legislation and learning who the main players are in the state's political structure.

Trainees will receive a \$30 daily stipend. Hohman said it hasn't been decided whether or not the legisla-

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ture will pay for their living expenses in the capital. He added the program may be accredited by Alaska universities in the future.

But you can't get into training for a staff position unless a legislator submits your name. "They will have first preference in nominating candidates," Hohman told reporters. "But vacancies in the program will be advertised."

According to one consultant aiding the instructional development of the program, applicants must have certain basic skills, like being able to read, and demonstrate "leadership qualities."

"There are four different areas," Hohman said. "Public information output (on various topics to be researched), internship training,

in-service training for staffers already on board, and legislators themselves can use the information to develop a background in an area where they may not have expertise."

He said the internship program is not meant to replace the non-partisan Research Division, which compiled such information. The division was abolished in June at the behest of Hohman, and confirmed by a vote of the council.

Nor is training a guarantee of employment with the legislature when it convenes. But instruction will create a pool of prepared interns ready to join lawmakers' staffs. Hohman said he does not expect an increase in the temporary legislative work force, rather trainees can be assimilated through vacancies.