

Bill toughens law on abuse of minors

The Senate today sent to Gov. Bill Sheffield a measure to crack down on those who sexually abuse minors.

The bill (CSSB74) aims to incorporate and strengthen existing laws against sexual offenses as well as create new laws banning activities not now barred by statute.

Among other things, the measure would make sexual contact between a parent and child a felony. Currently sexual contact between a parent

and child is a felony only if the parent threatens the child in order to engage in the conduct.

Under the measure, the sexual conduct need only occur to be a felony. If the victim is under 13, it would be a crime punishable by up to 10 years in prison. If he or she is between 13 and 18, it would be punishable by up to five years.

The proposed measure also would add new provisions to

control what prosecutors say is a serious problem in Alaska — juvenile babysitters sexually abusing their charges. It would make such abuse a Class A misdemeanor, providing the authorities the means to take offenders into custody and provide counseling.

The measure also would increase penalties across the board for sexual abuse of a minor. The penalties — within the felony range — would vary depending on the ages of the victim and the perpetrator.