

The Ombudsman—

Statement by Gov. Jay Hammond

I have today signed into law the Ombudsman Bill. This bill has come at a time when more people want more say about answers from, and access to, their government. This bill should accomplish just that. With the selection of an Ombudsman, Alaska will take her place among the leadership of those states seeking to help citizens grapple successfully with the complexities of government.

This Ombudsman Statute is patterned after Hawaii's. Our Ombudsman is defined as a non-partisan officer appointed by the Legislature to a five year term. His salary range will be the same as a superior court judge. He will process citizens' grievances against agencies of state government. He is empowered to subpoena persons to testify and to produce records and documents pertaining to a complaint or grievance. Although it is expected more of the citizens' grievances will be resolved by persuasion or negotiation, the Ombudsman may report his findings with regard to official misconduct to the Legislature, the Governor, a grand jury or to the public. In addition, municipalities may by ordinance elect to become subject to the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman.

I think we have taken a step forward today in making government more responsive to the people. I am proud to be part of it.