

TCC releases alcohol booklet

Banning Possession of Alcohol, a booklet outlining Alaska's local option liquor law, is available from the Tanana Chiefs Conference.

The law, passed last spring, permits communities to choose whether intoxicants can be used within their borders.

According to booklet author Lisa Jaeger, such an action is not the total solution to alcohol abuse:

"It can, however, be part of the village effort to help people deal with a major source of crime and domestic problems."

Jaeger writes that, "Banning possession of alcohol in the village is a community statement. The state is not pushing the local option law on anyone or any community."

"The most important decision concerning the law is whether to consider it at all."

Jaeger, a village government specialist, describes the election petition process in which village residents are asked if alcohol should be banned.

If 35 percent of the registered voters sign a petition, an election is scheduled during which voters are asked the same question. A majority vote decides the issue.

After the law takes effect, village law enforcement officers may confiscate alcohol and issue citations.

Violations are not criminal acts, Jaeger writes, but fines can be levied and the village can confiscate anything used in the manufacture, sale or transportation of alcohol.

That includes, she notes, airplanes, vehicles and boats.

Although fines for the first two offenses are \$100, that can be raised to \$1,000 for a third offense. The penalty can be worked off by performing community service at \$5 an hour.

The booklet warns that villages adopting the law must still follow state search-and-seizure law: If the alcohol is out of sight, an enforcement officer must have "probable cause" to assume the law is being broken.

And even if an officer has such probable cause, he must obtain a search warrant to examine private property.

Banning Possession of Alcohol says the law will be effective only if villages support their public safety officers. That can be done, writes Jaeger, by posting signs at the airport, along roads and rivers leading into the village, and in neighboring communities.

Copies of the booklet and additional information may be obtained from the Tanana Chiefs Conference office at 201 1st Ave., Fairbanks 99701.