

Question raised of Barnes on money in fight against granary

The Associated Press

ANCHORAGE — The state Attorney General's office has accused Anchorage Rep. Ramona Barnes of improperly using state money to pursue her fight to halt construction of a state-funded granary in Seward.

Barnes hauled the state into court during August in a bid to halt the project. She claimed governor's aide Bob Palmer

had awarded contracts for the \$8.5 million Seward project before the Legislature passed an appropriation measure last year to cover the costs.

The Attorney General's office charges Barnes is improperly using state funds from the House Leadership Fund to pursue the legal fight. The state claims money from the fund is intended to pay official expenses of House leaders, expenses of interim committees and temporary employees of those committees.

Assistant Attorney General

James Baldwin said the state is seeking repayment of all state funds used for "a purpose other than the initiation of legal proceedings against the state."

When notified of the state charges late Tuesday, Barnes said she has "stopped caring what those guys are saying down there (in Juneau)."

"I just can't believe them," she said.

Work on the grain terminal started in July, but Gov. Jay Hammond did not sign a bill to pay for the project until

Aug. 24.

Work on the project was halted in August by an Anchorage Superior Court Judge. The case now is before the Alaska Supreme Court.

Palmer's problems with the granary started when new leaders assumed control of the House in a late-session coup. A measure for immediate fin-

ancing of the granary wound up in a "limbo" file.

The session ended without action on the immediate-financing measure, but Hammond signed the bill after the attorney general advised him a bill does not necessarily have to be signed by both House leaders to pass the Legislature.