

Legislators vote selves pay raise

The Associated Press

Juneau — The House State Affairs Committee Thursday unanimously approved a measure raising the pay of lawmakers to \$46,800 a year and stopping daily payments of \$80.

Committee Chairman Mitch Abood, R-Anchorage, introduced the new version of the Senate measure after the committee rescinded action that earlier this week sent the bill to the House Finance Committee.

Abood said he wasn't the author of the new version, but supports it. "The more the committee members thought about it, they found that other lawmakers agreed with them. The legislators came out of the closet on the issue," Abood said.

He said he expects the pub-

lic to respond negatively to it, but asked, "Could any of the public come down here and pay what we have to pay?"

Abood said the public perceives that lawmakers only work during the session. But during the session interim, Abood said, the public calls lawmakers at work, wanting something, "and you can't wait until 5 p.m. It has to be done right now."

He said other state employees want raises, but the lawmakers who make the decisions are paid the same rate as a page or messenger.

If the new version is approved by the legislature and the governor, the lawmakers would pay their session expenses from their salaries.

House Minority Leader Mike Miller, D-Juneau, said legislators would earn less than

Cabinet members under the proposed pay scale.

The measure sent from the Senate would have raised lawmakers' pay by about \$90 a month retroactive to Jan. 1.

The legislative pay rates, under the Senate measure, would be \$1,760 a month. Under the new House version, lawmakers would make \$3,905 a month.

The Senate version also would authorize 5 percent pay raises and \$5 a month for all state officers not covered by collective bargaining agreements. Another measure to provide \$26.34 million to pay for the raises was sent to the House last week.

Contained in the Senate version is an automatic pay raise for lawmakers that equals the percentage increases in pay afforded state officers and employees.