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SENATOR DONALD OLSON

25TH ALASKA LEGISLATURE

ULU NEWS - DISTRICT T



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As sometimes happens, a race develops between the house and senate to see which side passes legislation on a particular topic first. The point being that the first over to the other side continues and is the vehicle for all other considerations on the issue. This was the case with SB 4, my bill on the senior care program, and HB 198, Rep Hawker's bill.

Both increased cash assistance for needy Alaskan seniors, up to \$130 per month more than the current \$120. HB 198, however, repealed the Longevity Bonus Program statutes and added increased coverage for the Denali Kid Care Program. While the house debated the longevity bonus issue, the senate added its own Denali Kid Care provision as a floor amendment to SB 4 and passed it over to the house. SB 4 is now in the house finance committee. The good news is that increased help for Alaskan seniors and increased access to medical care for children and pregnant mothers is likely this session.

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Senator Olson and Representative Reggie Joule presented Governor Sarah Palin with a signed basketball from the Nunamiut Lady Wolves of Anaktuvuk Pass. The Lady Wolves won the 1A State basketball championship.

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SB 45, the Sonya Ivanoff law on maximum sentencing for certain murders, passed the house by a vote of 38 to 0. The final action before going to the governor for her signature was a senate concurrence vote on the house changes. *This happened on April 13, Sonya's birthday.*

I had a good meeting with Boyuk Ryan and the Air Carriers Association. One issue discussed was the bypass mail freight rate increases that are scheduled for May 14. These increases will have dramatic effect on the costs of goods in rural Alaska. The bush caucus has been in touch with Sen. Stevens office in trying to get a change or adjustment to the rate proposal.

Another issue discussed is the U.S. Air Force consideration of closing the Barter Island and Galena

weather stations. These two stations are important to both commercial and general aviation in the district. In addition, the Galena airport is the principal alternative landing site for Barrow, Kotzebue, Nome, and Unalakleet.

Rep. Buch has introduced an interesting bill. HB 220 would ban computer-assisted remote hunting in the state. This is a technology developed in Texas where a mounted gun is hooked up to a computer and webcam in the field. A "hunter" can aim and shoot the gun from anywhere in the world with a computer keypad and the click of a mouse. I can imagine the money-making opportunities for commercial operations set up along migration routes. The bill does not apply to a persons with physical disabilities who use equipment or devices which enables them to be engaged in the act of hunting, not just shooting.

Visiting from the district this last week are the following: Nome Mayor Denise Michels. Sue Conner and Paullete Schuerch of Kotzebue, Katie Peterson of White Mountain, Pinky Tooyak of Point Hope and Ron Boynton of Barrow. .



~Senator Olson with members of the NANA Regional Corporation Board of Directors~



While in Nome recently, Senator Olson and family visited with students at the Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center (NACTEC). Senator Olson was given a tour, met staff and students and gave a presentation to the students on choosing aviation as a career path. He was able to share some of his aviation stories but also stressed the dangers of aviation. It was an informative and worthwhile visit.



Senator Olson at NACTEC



Senator Olson with Pinky Tooyak of Point Hope and Ron Boynton.



Senator Olson and family with Katie Peterson of White Mountain



Finance Co-Chair Hoffman and Senator Olson listening to testimony from Barrow, Kotzebue and Nome during the Finance Committee. Senator Olson was given the gavel while his district was testifying.