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House Bill 87 - "An Act relating to participation in matters before the Board of Fisheries and the Board of Game by the members of the respective boards; and providing for an effective date."

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 87 changes the manner that the Board of Fisheries and Board of Game function. It allows members to deliberate on subjects for which they have a declared personal or financial interest according to AS 39.52, the Ethics Act.

Title 39 prohibits a member from "taking or withholding official action in order to affect a matter in which the member has a personal or financial interest." (AS 39.52.120(b)(4)). "Official action" is defined under the Act to mean "advice, participation, or assistance, including for example, a recommendation, decision, approval, disapproval, vote, or other similar action, including inaction by a public officer." (AS 39.52.960(14)).

Currently, Board members are required to divulge a conflict of interest if they or their families are involved in the subject being deliberated on. The conflicted member can then no longer offer their input on the process and cannot vote on the matter at hand. This bill allows the conflicted member to offer remarks and input, but the member still cannot vote on the issue. The member is also precluded from voting on whether they have a conflict of interest. Allowing members with expertise in particular fields to deliberate will help the Board make more informed decisions and lead to stronger fisheries management statewide.