

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

## **House Bill 392: Alaska Commission for Women and Girls Sponsor Statement**

House Bill 392 creates a Commission for Women and Girls in the Office of the Governor. The Commission's primary focus will be to identify the legal problems and discrimination in Alaska workplaces that prevent women from earning equal pay for equal work, and other best practices to promote economic, social, legal and political justice for women. The Commission will prepare a report for the governor and legislature detailing policy recommendations and a plan of action with achievable goals.

The need for this Commission became apparent after a January 29, 2018 event at the Capitol with a panel of women presenting on a variety of issues facing Alaska women. What stood out was a 2017 report from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development highlighting the fact that women earn an average of 68 cents for every dollar a man makes in Alaska doing the same work, with women of color typically earning less.

The study found this to be true in 80% of Alaska's occupations and at every age and educational level, even when all other factors like education, seniority, profession, and job category are controlled – and even though men and women participate in the workforce at a nearly equal rate. A similar report from 30 years ago showed women earned 62 cents when doing the same work.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the federal law that prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, and religion. The Alaska Human Rights Law (Alaska Statutes 18.80.220) is the state law that makes it illegal for an employer to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, and physical or mental disability. And, in some instances, it is illegal for an employer to discriminate on the basis of age, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, or parenthood. A separate law (Alaska Statute 47.30.865), along with the Human Rights Law, prohibits discrimination on the basis of mental illness.

It's time we work to develop solutions to this problem that affects every family with a woman in it. I urge your support for House Bill 392.