

# Alaska State Legislature

## House and Senate Judiciary Committees

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## **Legislative Leaders Announce Hearing and Vow to Complete Investigation Ahead of Schedule**

(ANCHORAGE) – Legislative leaders today announced that a joint House and Senate Judiciary Committee hearing will take place on Friday, September 12, 2008, at 9:00 a.m. in Anchorage to issue subpoenas in the ongoing investigation into the events surrounding the termination of former Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan. They also set a date of October 10, 2008, for the completion of special counsel Stephen Branchflower’s report.

This week, seven key witnesses informed Mr. Branchflower through their attorneys that they would not provide depositions. Their depositions, which had been agreed to and scheduled earlier with Mr. Branchflower, were cancelled within the last 72 hours. Additionally, the Governor’s lawyer has stated that he represents the Governor and the Governor’s office, and has forbidden any contact by Mr. Branchflower with any member of that office. Mr. Branchflower wishes to depose some of those employees. The issuance of the subpoenas is intended to get at the truth and to expedite the completion of his report to the public.

House Judiciary Chairman Jay Ramras, R-Fairbanks, said that the reason for the earlier completion date for the report is to avoid the appearance of a last-minute ‘October surprise,’ and to give both sides plenty of time to respond to the contents of the report. “I met with Mr. Branchflower on Wednesday, along with my vice-chair Representative Nancy Dahlstrom and Senator Hollis French. We agreed that an earlier completion date was achievable, and that it was fair to all sides. We are satisfied that the report can be finished by no later than October 10, 2008.”

Representative Ramras expressed confidence in Mr. Branchflower’s ability to produce a timely report. “I just met the man for the first time Wednesday. I was impressed. He is organized and task-oriented. He says he can get done ahead of schedule. I believe him.”

“We also discussed and agreed amongst ourselves that no subpoena will be issued for the Governor,” said Representative Nancy Dahlstrom, R-Eagle River. “She has told the public that she intends to cooperate with the investigation, indeed, she has told the public that she welcomes the investigation and I have every faith that she means it. If necessary we can send Mr. Branchflower to wherever the Governor is, or she can give

her statement to him over the telephone, whatever is most convenient for her. We recognize that her schedule is extremely busy, and we want to accommodate that.”

Under Alaska law, a subpoena requiring the attendance of a witness before a standing committee may be issued by the chairman of a committee when authorized to do so by a majority of the membership of the committee and with the concurrence of the Senate President or of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

“We had scheduled and then cancelled a joint House-Senate Judiciary hearing for Aug. 18, 2008, because at that time every witness that Mr. Branchflower contacted agreed to sit down and give a statement,” said Senator Hollis French, D-Anchorage.

Senator Charlie Huggins, R-Rural Mat-Su/Chugiak, the vice-chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, also expressed his support for an earlier report. “Clearly it is in the best interests of everyone to get the job done ahead of schedule,” said Senator Huggins.

For more information, contact Senator French at (907) 269-0234.

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