

Fax from Faith Myers/Dorrance Collins  
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Attached 3 pages

cc: Senator Bettye Davis  
Representative Sharon Cissna  
Rep. Les Gara  
Rep. Peggy Wilson  
Sen. Hollis S. French II  
Sen. Fred Dyson  
Sen. Lyda Green  
Rep. Berta Gardner  
Rep. Beth Kerttula  
Rep. Lesil McGuire  
Gov. Frank Murkowski  
James B. Gottstein, Esq.

9/25/06

## News Release - Juneau Empire

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Psychiatric patients have struggled for 14 and a half years to have a fair grievance procedure produced in Alaska. We're asking the Juneau Empire → produce some coverage on the issue.

Through studies, Alaska social work students know it wasn't that long ago that citizens with a severe mental illness were considered criminals. Some of the laws have been changed, but attitudes that prevent real progress have not.

In a July '06 Supreme Court (AK.) decision, the justices mentioned that Alaska Psychiatric Institute and the State almost exclusively in their briefs referred to citizens in prison when talking about rights that should be given to citizens civilly committed in a psychiatric institution.

(2)

The State's basic attitude hasn't changed; anyone who comes down with a severe mental illness, the State wants to treat that patient as if they were a criminal. State courts, Federal courts, State Supreme Courts have said that cannot happen.

As often happens, laws are easier to change than attitudes. Management in psychiatric institutions find new ways to do the same old thing, depriving patients civilly committed of their rights.

We're working to change the attitude, the psychiatric patients' grievance procedure, (which is the backbone of patients' rights) and the Unit Manuals which outline a patient's rights and privileges while in the psychiatric institutions.

There are approximately 5 hospitals that do civil commitments.

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Alaska Mental Health Board  
will meet October 9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup>, Best  
Western in Wasilla, Alaska.

AMHB (907) 465-3071

On the agenda will be grievance  
procedures, Patient Rights,  
what rights and authority does the  
API Governing Body have, etc.

(After reading State and Federal  
regulations, we believe they have a  
great deal of authority; Management  
has said they don't.)

API Governing Body will  
meet somewhere between Nov 5<sup>th</sup>  
to the 15<sup>th</sup>, (No firm date has  
been set yet.) Call 269-7106.

Management is under pressure to  
improve rights.

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