Op/Ed
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By Commissioner Susan Bell

ABC Board Move

Earlier this year the Alaska Legislature passed House Bill 125, moving the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board (ABC Board) from the Department of Public Safety to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED).

The ABC Board and law enforcement agencies work together effectively to ensure oversight of the liquor industry, and this will not be diminished by the change in the organizational chart.

Many regulatory and licensing functions are located within DCCED, including banking and securities, insurance, public utilities, and professional licensing. Placing the ABC Board in DCCED allows the Board and the regulated industry to derive efficiencies from department staff engaged in similar functions.

The ABC Board was established by the Legislature at Statehood to exercise independent oversight and control of the alcoholic beverage industry in the state, including licensing and regulatory enforcement. The Board’s move to DCCED does not lessen the Board’s regulatory authority; its statutory responsibility to apply and enforce the laws governing the manufacture, barter, possession, and sale of alcoholic beverages remains intact.

Some concern was expressed during legislative hearings that moving the ABC Board might diminish the Board’s enforcement abilities. Citizens can be assured the Parnell Administration is deeply committed to the ABC Board’s mission, regulatory, and enforcement roles. When signing the bill, Gov. Sean Parnell also committed to monitor the effectiveness of ABC Board under the new administrative configuration.

Importantly, state and local law enforcement agencies will continue to enforce Alaska liquor laws under their respective legal authorities.

The bottom line is the public interest will continue to be served and protected by the ABC Board.