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**PUSH TO REDEFINE “LOBBYIST” BY STATE CHAMBER HAS HIDDEN
AGENDA**

**PRESS CONFERENCE – MONDAY – 3/24/03 – 11:30AM – AKPIRG
OFFICE**

The legislative push by the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce (HB 106) to redefine lobbyist has a hidden agenda: To remove legal restrictions that limit lobbyists to campaign contributions only in their own districts.

“By redefining ‘lobbyist’ representatives of powerful, monied interests can return to their old ways of matching persuasive talk with campaign contributions to buy influence in the political process,” stated Steve Cleary of AkPIRG. “This is not about talk. This is about money.”

“Alaskans pressed for Campaign Finance Reform that included a mandate to break the link between lobbying and salting the system with money. The public wants to know who lobbies its lawmakers far away from the public eye and it wants to limit lobbyist to words and not buckets of cash,” Cleary continued. “HB 106 is a sneaky way to defy the public will and allow lobbyists to get around campaign finance reform.”

The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce is leading the effort to pass the bill. Pete Leathard, VECO President, is also on the Executive committee of the Chamber and will take over as Chair next year. Bill Allen, a registered lobbyist for VECO in 2002 and 2003, was fined \$590 in June of 2002 by the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC) for failing to register as a lobbyist.

Mr. Allen donated \$21,800 to candidates and political parties in 1998, \$12,250 in 1999, \$22,550 in 2000, \$12,350 in 2001 but just \$6,950 in 2002 since as a lobbyist he was only allowed to donate in his district.