



Alaska State Legislature  
Representative Les Gara

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***DARFUR GENOCIDE LEGISLATION HEARD THURSDAY***

Wed., 8 a.m., National Darfur Genocide Debate Local Again—Bill Hearing Start

JUNEAU— On Thursday, the House State Affairs Committee will hear bills to stop the State from investing in foreign companies that are complicit in the 5-year old Darfur genocide. It is expected that the legislation will have bi-partisan support this year, after it became an issue in the national presidential election. “We don’t need to make money off genocide in this state. Congress has banned American companies from doing business in Sudan, and we can find better investments than in the few foreign companies still doing business there,” said newly elected Rep. [Pete Petersen](#) (D-Anch).

Reps. [Les Gara](#), [Berta Gardner](#), [Beth Kerttula](#) and Petersen have filed [HB 45](#), which requires the state, and the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation, to stop investing in companies the international community has identified as complicit in the Darfur Genocide. Rep. Bob Lynn and the Governor have filed similar bills. Roughly 30 other states have already joined the Darfur Divestment movement. Since 2003 the Sudanese government and paramilitary groups have killed over 200,000 of their own citizens, and jeopardized the lives of 2 million others through displacement.

Sarah Wallner, a member of Save Darfur Anchorage, has been pushing for state legislation on this issue for 3 years. According to Wallner, “An estimated 300,000 people have died and 2.5 million have been displaced to refugee camps in the ongoing genocide in Darfur, Sudan. Alaska can add our voice by becoming the 28th state in the nation by implementing targeted divestment of our investments in foreign companies doing business with the government of Sudan.”




Gara and Rep. Bob Lynn pushed similar legislation in 2007 and 2008, but it was blocked by opponents in the State capitol in 2007 and 2008. The sponsors believe the political climate has changed on this issue since then.

Governor Palin, who raised this issue during the Presidential campaign and whose Administration originally opposed the effort, now has expressed support for the effort. It is hoped a larger alliance of policymakers, with the Governor’s support, will help get the legislation through the legislature. “As time has passed, the power of this idea has grown. This is a moral issue. I’d disagree with those who believe it’s appropriate for Alaska to invest in companies that are benefitting from Genocide,” said Gara.

To date, permanent Fund Chairman Mike Burns has to date refused to stop investing in these companies, and has testified that the Permanent Fund intends to continue to make these investments unless blocked by the Legislature or Governor. Gara has called on Burns to reverse course, and it is hoped he will reconsider his position.

For questions, contact Rep. Pete Petersen at 240-1049, Les Gara at 250-0106, Berta Gardner at 223-9330, or Beth Kerttula at 209-5104.

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