CHARR Head Reflects on One Year Under Commerce

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

About a year ago the oversight for bars and liquor stores in Alaska was returned to the State Department of Commerce, where it had been until Governor Frank Murkowski moved the Alcohol Beverage Control Board to the Department of Law. As Dale Foxx, head of the state’s largest liquor lobby pointed out on a recent visit to Kodiak, change has been slow in coming.

“Well, cultural change takes a while. I wouldn’t call it an unqualified success yet, because we’ve still got a little bit of … that culture hasn’t seeped into everything yet, but we’re hopful it will. That they’ll look at people as when they make a mistake, it’s a mistake not a deliberate attempt to flaunt the law.”

Foxx is the executive director of CHARR, the Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant and Retail Association. He said the difference between the department of law and department of commerce is one largely of attitude toward business.

“You know one of the things that happens when you’re in the State Troopers Division is they wake up and they stretch and they say we’ve got to go find bad guys doing something bad so we can catch them. That’s the mindset over there, versus the mindset at Commerce, which is ‘We want businesses to follow the rules and do a good job, but we want to help them get there. Totally different mindset. We wanted an environment where the government was looking to both assist and recognize the value of restaurants and bars and package stores because they’re part of the economy and part of our life in Alaska.”

Alaska CHARR spent years lobbying the state legislature to have the ABC Board moved. It finally happened just over a year ago.