

COMPASS PIECE

I have introduced two ordinances dealing with dog poop on our sports fields. I introduced these 2 ordinances to stimulate discussion on how best to handle the dog poop problem on our children's' ball fields.

The intent of both ordinances is to address the problem created by a few dog owners who turn their animals loose inside the fenced areas of sports fields, allow them to do their business and leave the results for others to clean up. As a little league coach, I have cleaned ball fields of dog poop, scraped it off little leaguers' shoes, cleaned it out of dugouts and listened to the concerns of parents. My ordinances are in response to the acts of an irresponsible few who do not respect the boys and girls who use these fields.

Both ordinances have been referred to the Parks and Recreation Commission and to the Animal Control Advisory Board for public hearing and comment. When these 2 bodies have done their review and made their recommendations, the ordinances will come back to the Assembly.

The public hearing before the Assembly is scheduled for September 25. These 3 public processes provide plenty of opportunity for comment and for new ideas on how to address this very real problem.

One new idea is that underused fenced fields be designated as appropriate locations for dogs to run loose in an enclosed area. If this idea were adopted, I would hope that the owners would remove the evidence of their animals' presence as required by current law.

Police do not have the resources to enforce the existing "pooper scooter" laws. My ordinances will make enforcement possible.

The little leagues and other baseball associations maintain these ball fields at no cost to the City. This means mowing, raking, adding special dirt to the infields and pitcher's mounds, weeding, fertilizing, fixing fences and gates, etc. They should be able to use these fields free of feces.

The Assembly has developed 5 off leash dog parks. I supported the creation of these parks. To say to dog owners that you cannot allow your animal to run loose on a fenced little league field is not a significant infringement on dogs or their owners, particularly when other locations have been made specifically available to them. My proposals are an attempt to protect our young people who play baseball, softball, soccer and other sports from the few irresponsible owners who do not respect other users.

Anchorage citizens have a wide diversity of opportunities to enjoy the out of doors. Dog parks are one example. What is required of us is that we respect each another's uses. Just as I wouldn't drive a snow machine on a groomed cross country ski trail, I believe that the fenced fields, set aside for and maintained by the baseball associations, are not appropriate places for dogs to do their business. Even if the dog poop is cleaned up, some remains behind. With the other locations available, why should these fenced fields not be reserved for the young ball players without the persistent presence of poop? If someone can answer that question, I will be pleased to withdraw my proposals.