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NEWS RELEASE



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ATTORNEY GENERAL REORGANIZES AND STRENGTHENS PROSECUTION EFFORTS IN SOUTHEAST

(Juneau) -- Attorney General Gregg Renkes announced today a reorganization to strengthen the district attorney's offices in the First Judicial District.

On June 1, 2003, Patrick J. Gullufsen, currently serving as deputy attorney general for the criminal division, will become the district attorney in Juneau. Gullufsen's career in prosecution has included previously serving as the Juneau DA, as well as an assistant district attorney in the Fairbanks District Attorney's Office, and assistant attorney general for the Office of Special Prosecutions and Appeals. A new criminal deputy will be appointed in Anchorage in the near future. Gullufsen will succeed Richard Svobodny as the Juneau District Attorney.

Svobodny, who has served as the Juneau District Attorney since 1984, has accepted a new position as a senior assistant district attorney in Juneau. Svobodny has been the longest serving district attorney in Alaska and has over 25 years of experience as a prosecutor. He will be responsible for specially assigned cases throughout the First Judicial District, mentoring new prosecutors, and providing training and assistance to police departments throughout Southeast Alaska. He will also take over responsibility for the prosecution of criminal cases in Wrangell. Moving the responsibility for the prosecution of Wrangell cases from the Ketchikan District Attorney's Office to the Juneau office will make more prosecutorial resources available for the Ketchikan area.

Ketchikan District Attorney Steve West will continue to head up criminal prosecution in Southern Southeast Alaska, including Prince of Wales Island and Metlakatla. West was appointed Ketchikan district attorney in September 1999, and he served as an assistant district attorney in Ketchikan prior to becoming DA.

Assistant District Attorney Natasha Norris will continue as the state prosecutor in the Sitka District Attorney's Office. Norris, a long-time Alaska resident, was hired in August 2001 as an assistant district attorney in the Misdemeanor Unit in Anchorage. She transferred to Sitka in June 2002 to serve as the resident Assistant DA. The Sitka Office also covers criminal cases in Petersburg.

An additional assistant district attorney position will be added to the Juneau office. Jack Schmidt, who was born and raised in Juneau, will be transferred from his position as an assistant attorney general for the Office of Special Prosecutions and Appeals to the Juneau District Attorney's Office effective June 9, 2003.

With these new assignments, along with the strong staff already present, the District Attorney's Offices in the First Judicial District will be able to more aggressively respond to and prosecute crime. The reorganization fulfills a goal of the Murkowski Administration to bring the skills of experienced prosecutors to where it is needed and increase opportunities for training of newer prosecutors. These changes by Attorney General Renkes, along with the Governor's crime legislation, are important steps in improving law enforcement and prosecution in Alaska's communities.

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