

State of Alaska
Department of Law

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NEWS RELEASE



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Protecting Alaska's Future

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Department of Law Donates Taxol Settlement Excess Proceeds to Hospice of Anchorage

(Anchorage) – Governor Frank H. Murkowski and Attorney General David Márquez announced today that the Department of Law is directing \$10,000 distributed to Alaska for use in cancer treatment to Hospice of Anchorage. The donation is part of a disbursement of funds received by all 50 states and the District of Columbia as part of a settlement with Bristol-Myers Squibb ("Bristol") in December 2002.

Under the settlement Bristol was required to pay about \$62.5 million to the states. The settlement included \$12.5 million to reimburse consumers who purchased the drug, and \$7.5 million in free Taxol® supplied to the states. Other settlement money was used for case costs, and distributed to state agencies for Medicaid and other Taxol® related overcharges. Some of the \$12.5 million set aside for consumer claims was not claimed by Taxol users, and was distributed to the states for use toward a cancer cause.

"Today's cancer treatment therapies cover a broad spectrum of concerns including diagnosis, treatment, counseling and post-treatment monitoring and each of these areas deserve attention and financial support," said Murkowski. "Hospice of Anchorage was chosen because it provides a valuable and needed service to cancer patients in the final days of their illness. Hospice offers its services regardless of ability to pay, and provides benefits to a broad range of Alaska cancer patients."

Bristol is the brand name manufacturer of Taxol®. From 1992 until December 1997, Bristol had the exclusive right, granted by the FDA, to market this drug. Bristol was sued in 2002 under allegations that it had used fraudulent means to delay the entry of lower-priced generic versions of Taxol®, thereby illegally inflating the cost of chemotherapy for thousands of patients. Taxol® is an anti-cancer drug used to treat ovarian, breast and a variety of other cancers.

"Sometimes, despite our medical advances, we are not equipped to avoid the ultimate consequences of terminal illnesses," said Márquez. "Thanks to organizations like Hospice we can care for patients reaching the end of their lives, and their loved ones, with dedication and dignity."

"In fiscal year 2003/2004 Hospice served 83 patients, the majority of whom were in the final stages of cancer," said Julia Thorsness, Executive Director of Hospice of Anchorage. "Nearly 80-percent of our expenses go to the multidisciplinary group of professionals who help our patients and their loved-ones meet the transition from life through death and to cope with loss and grief. This contribution will give Hospice the ability to embrace even more Alaskans through this traumatic crossroads in their life."

This year marks Hospice of Anchorage's 25th year anniversary. Hospice is a member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. November marks the 27th National Hospice and Palliative Care month.

For additional information, please contact Assistant Attorney General Ed Sniffen at (907) 269-5200.

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