

## **Senator Gray-Jackson's Notes**

### **October 5, 2023**

October is Filipino American History Month! It was an honor to introduce and carry legislation in the Senate to honor this incredibly important month! The bill recognizing October as Filipino American Month passed both legislative bodies on May 12<sup>th</sup>.

Did you know that Filipinos have been an integral part of Alaska's history for over 100 years? Some of the earliest Filipino immigrants came to Alaska in the 1900s to work in the salmon canneries during the summer fishing seasons. They braved harsh weather and challenging conditions to help build Alaska's commercial fishing industry.

Filipino-Americans are part of the fabric of Alaska's diverse history. Today, the Filipino-American population in Alaska remains an essential part of our state's cultural diversity and economic prosperity.

Let's take time to recognize and honor the contributions of Filipino Americans to Alaska's past, present, and future!

### **Winter is Approaching**

Please be careful when traveling on snowy/slippery roads because, as you know, the roads can get very slippery and hazardous in snowy conditions. Here are some tips to keep you and your family safe during the winter:

- Give yourself plenty of time to get to your destination- leave early.
- Take your time and drive slower.
- Leave extra space between yourself and other vehicles.
- Have an emergency kit that includes a shovel, ice scraper, hand warmers, blankets, food and water.

Additionally, [check out The Alaska Department of Transportation's handy Know Before You Go road condition map](#) or dial the new 511-INFO.

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Let's look out for each other as we begin to approach the winter months.

**Permanent Fund Dividend**

The Alaska Permanent Fund is a state investment fund that was established in 1976 to invest a portion of Alaska's oil revenue for future generations. Each year a portion of the earnings from the fund are distributed to eligible Alaska residents in the form of the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD). Although the amount in the Governor's budget was more than what was appropriated, it was important to provide a PFD that was sustainable now and for future generations. State Statutes dictate that we are only allowed to use 5% of the Permanent Fund's earnings reserve. Half of that is for services and the other half is for a PFD. I recognize that there are many of you who depend on the annual PFD for reasons such as paying bills, buying needed food and clothing, or medicine. But, if the statutory PFD was provided, the result would have been fewer services that would include senior and disability services, Medicaid, and more in addition to an unbalanced budget which is not allowed.

We really need to address changing the PFD formula so that it is more aligned with reality today in 2023 and not 1980. Hopefully, that will happen during the next Legislative Session which starts on January 16, 2024.

Although there are some who aren't very pleased with the \$1,312 PFD, I'm proud of the budget both the Senate and the House approved because it provided funding for services including much-needed childcare grants, school funding, Medicaid, and more. It also provided for a sustainable PFD and a budget surplus of \$84M instead of a deficit.

*Always feel free to reach out to me during the Session and the Interim. I'm here for you.*

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*Always representing your interests!*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elvi Gray-Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E" and a stylized "J".

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