

**Session:**  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
(907) 465-6944

**Alaska State Senate  
Senator Forrest Dunbar**



**Interim: 1500**  
W. Benson Blvd. Anchorage,  
Alaska 99503  
Sen.forrest.dunbar@akleg.gov

**Session 2024 Community Council Update  
January**

**Bipartisan Caucus Priorities**

Sufficient education funding and returning to a defined benefit for public employees remain a focus of this legislature. Senator Cathy Giessel's [SB 88](#), which I have cosponsored, would return public employees to a defined benefit. Moving this bill across the finish line is a heavy lift, but it is a necessity towards retaining a young and vibrant workforce. Governor Dunleavy's veto of half the one-time increase in education funding from last session, resulting in the exclusion of over \$87 million from the current year's education budget, is the most significant and pressing issue in this first week of session.

**New Legislation**

*SB 159, Alaska Veteran's Poppy Day*

Senate Bill 159 designates the Friday before Memorial Day as "Alaska Veterans' Poppy Day," encouraging Alaskans to wear red poppies as a symbol of the sacrifice made by veterans.

*SB 162, State Residency: Sell/Rent Real Property*

Senate Bill 162 will add "residency in this state" as a protected category, making it unlawful to discriminate on that basis. The bill also prohibits discriminatory inquiries, record-keeping, and advertising related to real estate transactions based on residency in the state.

*SB 166, Mental Health/Psychedelic Med. Task Force*

Senate Bill 166 will establish a Task Force, which will assess the use of psychedelic medicine to address the mental health crisis, consider barriers to access, and explore legal pathways for legalization, while considering potential public health impacts. This is a response to the likely FDA legalization of psychedelics for therapeutic purposes that many mental health advocates, especially veterans' groups, are anticipating.

**Online SNAP Applications**

The Alaska Division of Public Assistance introduced an online application for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The new online application takes an average of 20 minutes to complete and can be accessed on your phone or computer. To apply for SNAP online and learn whether you qualify, visit <https://health.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/SNAP/Online-SNAP-Application.aspx>

Those who have been waiting for more than 30 days for the state to process their application for SNAP or other public assistance benefits can file a Fair Hearing request. The form can be found at <https://alaskalawhelp.org/resource/fair-hearings>. For help filing that request, local nonprofit Alaska Legal Services Corp. can be reached at 1-888-478-2572. My office can also help with the application process.

**PFD**

The deadline to apply for the 2023 PFD is March 31<sup>st</sup> at <https://mypfd.alaska.gov/>. Please call our office as soon as possible if you hit any roadblocks in this process.

<https://tinyurl.com/SenDunbar-Newsletter>