



Alaska State Legislature

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Serving the Sand Lake, Spenard, and Turnagain Communities

March 2022 Community Council Update

Start of Session Newsletter and Constituent Survey — One of the most important components of my work as your Representative is hearing about what matters to you. Each household will receive our newsletter and survey in the mail. You can complete the survey by hand or online: <https://forms.gle/ahtdRKC2Ttsu4wJu5>.

The online survey will remain open until March 7. Please take a moment to share your thoughts!

State of the Judiciary — Chief Justice Winfree used [his speech](#) to highlight the court system's ongoing response to COVID-19 and how to safely hold criminal jury trials, the Child in Need of Aid (CINA) case backlog, and successful programs the court system offers for resolving disputes without trial. The courts have worked to stay open during the pandemic and have adjusted their systems because they remain committed to not putting the public at risk. The court system accomplished the following in 2021:

- Resolved over 30,000 petitions in CINA, domestic relations, probate, and domestic violence cases;
- Held more than 327,000 court hearings in criminal and civil cases, nearly the same as in 2019, before the pandemic began;
- Over 5,500 trials were held by a judge sitting without a jury, usually in civil cases, again almost the same as in 2019; and
- Issued about 88,000 rulings and orders resolving disputes such as evidentiary questions, motions to change the amount of child support a parent must pay, or proceedings to finally close a case.

The court system is seeking funds to reopen the courts on Friday afternoons. They closed six years ago, saving \$2 million annually. [I took a moment to reflect on the Chief Justice's address](#) and the importance of respecting the three branches of government. Visit the [Rep. Matt Claman YouTube page](#) to view.

Redistricting Court Decision — Superior Judge Thomas Matthews issued his [decision](#) on the five cases that objected to the redistricting final maps. Matthews struck down the Alaska Redistricting Board's decisions on the East Anchorage senate pairing with Eagle River and the Skagway-Juneau house district. Matthews found the redistricting decisions challenged in the other three cases were constitutional.

On February 16, the board met and voted 3-2 to appeal Matthews' decisions about the East Anchorage-Eagle River senate pairing and the Skagway-Juneau house district to the Alaska Supreme Court. The 171-page decision offered great detail about the process that the board took in creating the final maps. In the case of East Anchorage being paired with Eagle River, Matthews further found that three members of the board [participated in a secretive process](#), failed to hold meaningful public hearings, failed to meet constitutional deadlines, failed to make good faith efforts to accommodate public hearings, and violated the Open Meetings Act. The pairing itself violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Alaska Constitution.

Going forward, if the Alaska Supreme Court affirms Matthews' decision, the board will have to address the Anchorage Senate pairings, including East Anchorage and Eagle River. Changing the East Anchorage-Eagle River pairing may further impact other Anchorage senate pairings. The deadline for final versions of maps for the 2022 General Election is June 1.