

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

HOUSE FINANCE
•
LEGISLATIVE BUDGET
AND AUDIT
•
ETHICS (ALTERNATE)
•
FINANCE
SUBCOMMITTEES:
Courts and Department of
Law
Health, Family and
Community Services
University



CAMPBELL PARK
•
DIMOND BUSINESS
DISTRICT
•
EAST SAND LAKE
•
MIDTOWN
•
TAKU-CAMPBELL

REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

Date: February 14, 2024

To: Midtown Community Council

From: Representative Andy Josephson

Re: Session Update

Hello Neighbors,

Session is fully underway. At this point of the year, the focus is Finance subcommittees, but there is no shortage of other important work to be done. I want to dive a little into what subcommittees I sit on and highlight bills making their way through the legislative process that capture the main discussion within the capitol building this session.

Finance Subcommittees

Finance subcommittees allow the body to divide and tackle the budget into administrative departments. Once business in these subcommittees is finished, they “close-out” meaning the chair of the committee submits their recommendations for amendments to the Governor’s proposed budget. Then, the House Finance Committee takes up a committee substitute of the budget and the legislative process continues.

I sit on three subcommittees: Department of Health/Department of Family and Community Services, Department of Law/Judiciary, and University. The former two have met already to

discuss a general overview of the department's finances in the prior year and the proposed budget for this year. Some key issues so far are:

- SNAP backlog and creating 20 permanent full-time positions for SNAP technicians
- Post-pandemic Medicaid redeterminations saw a significant decrease in approvals
- A Better Childhood's class action lawsuit against the Office of Children's Services
- Professional and family guardians recruitment crisis in the Office of Public Advocacy

If you have any questions about these issues or others related to material from my finance subcommittees, please reach out to my staff and I and we will assist you.

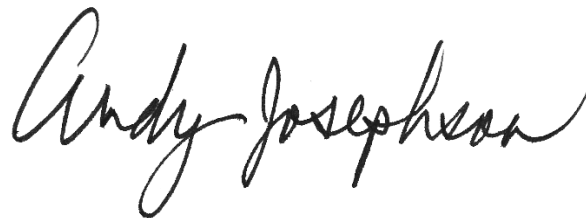
Bills of Major Discussion

I have covered bills that I am working on in previous memos, but I have yet to cover other bills of significance making their way through the legislative process. Here are a few worth noting:

- HB 50: Carbon Capture and Storage. Last year, the legislature passed HB 49 which granted the state authority to take land with prospects of resource development, not develop the resources and, instead, charge corporations a fee to offset their carbon emissions. HB 50 is slightly different. Instead of marking forested areas as protected carbon dumps, HB 50 takes carbon in liquid form and sequesters it underground. This bill is expected to receive a lot of committee attention.
- SB 140: Internet for Schools. This bill is about much more than minimum internet speeds in state schools (100 mbps). The single subject rule allowed me to pass an amendment which placed a BSA increase of \$680 inside SB 140. Consequently, other education-related legislation has also been amended into the bill including charter school expansion and teacher retention incentives. This bill awaits scheduling on the House floor and, if passed, could result in a substantial (but probably not large enough) increase for public education in the state.
- SB 88/HB 22: Pensions for Public Employees: SB 88 passed out of the Senate recently and is scheduled to meet my bill, HB 22, in the House State Affairs subcommittee. SB 88 creates a new defined benefits retirement plan for all public employees in the state. Some critics are concerned about the cost of administering such a retirement plan to all employees. HB 22 is narrower, creating a new defined benefit retirement plan just for public safety and peace officers. The House majority is in the driver's seat, so it is unclear which direction these pension bills will move toward at this time.

Carbon capture, education funding, and retirement plans are just a few of the major discussion points this session. Other topics include Cook Inlet gas supply, the Governor's executive orders, and (as always) a comprehensive fiscal plan. If you have input you want to give our office on these issues, or you want to testify on issues important to you, our office can assist you with that as well.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Josephson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.