

Senator Gray-Jackson's Notes
Sand Lake Community Council
May 13, 2024

As we honor Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month this May, it provides an opportunity to reflect on the importance of recognizing and celebrating the diverse AAPI communities in Alaska.

As mentioned in earlier notes, I introduced Senate Bill 131 which requires AAPI education acknowledging the history and contributions of AAPI. This bill passed the Senate unanimously on May 3rd and it was heard and moved out of House Education on May 8th. It is now waiting to be scheduled on the House Floor for a vote.

This Session

The following is an update of my current legislative priorities for this session.

Public Schools: Mental Health Education (SB 24) – The Bill moved out of the House Education Committee on May 3rd and is now waiting to be heard in House Finance Committee.

Stay at Work/Return to Work (SB 206) – Passed the Senate by a vote of 18-1 on May 6th. It will be heard in House Labor and Commer Committee on Monday May 13th.

Budget Updates

Capital Budget

On April 14th, the Capital budget passed the Senate Floor by a vote of 15 to 3. The Capital Budget is \$3.5 billion (\$3 billion in federal funds and \$500 million in state funds. Highlights Include:

- \$36 million for major maintenance projects in K-12 schools (including Northwood Elementary which is in my district).
- \$26.4 million for the renovation of various University of Alaska buildings statewide
- \$30 million split between rebates for homebuyers for new energy-efficient homes; weatherization projects to help reduce power bills; and new housing in rural Alaska for teachers and public safety workers, among others.

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- \$15 million to help fund a nursing facility at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium which is intended to alleviate pressure at the Alaska Native Medical Center.
- \$2 million for the 76th Avenue Surface - Taku Lake to Old Seward Highway project
- \$330,000 for the Midtown Park Family Chalet
- \$1 million to complete the Northern Lights Sound Barrier Fence
- \$20,000 for Outreaching Lives which seeks to address houselessness in our city.

Operating Budget

The operating budget was passed by the House on April 11th and is now on the Senate Floor for a vote. Although the House included a PFD check in the amount of \$2,273, the Senate Finance Committee used the 75/25 (75% to fund services, 25% to fund the PFD) formula which is more sustainable and will provide for a balanced budget which is required by law. The Operating budget also includes:

- \$8.9 million to improve support for children grades kindergarten through third grade
- \$44.9 million for school bond debt reimbursement
- \$3.5 million for 10 additional Village Public Safety Officer positions
- \$3.7 million to the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- \$2 million for 11 new positions from the Department of Law to assist with domestic violence and sexual assault cases.
- \$4 million to address the Anchorage homeless shelter – facility at the former Solid Waste building.
- \$20 million in Alaska Marine Highway System backstop funding was added to ensure the ferry system is there for rural communities.
- \$7.5 million for childcare assistance
- \$76.8 million for fire suppression
- \$14.9 million for the Department of Corrections
- \$3 million for the Department of Commerce for Food Bank grants
- \$5 million for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute
- \$30 million for Community Assistance (formerly called Revenue Sharing)

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The Senate budget reduced the governor's budget by \$12.2 Billion and includes a \$1,360 PFD (using the 75/25 split) and a \$222.00 energy relief check. If oil remains at \$93-95 per barrel, we will receive \$500 in energy relief money in FY26. The budget also includes:

- \$680 Base Student Allocation increase
- \$5.2 million for K-3 Reading (to fund the Alaska Reads Act)
- \$15.1 million for Disaster Relief
- \$20 million for the Alaska Marine Highway System
- \$7.3 million for Pupil Transportation
- \$35.1 million for Fire Suppression
- \$30 million for Community Assistance (formerly called Revenue Sharing)
- \$5 million for Alaska Travel Industry
- \$10 million for Alaska Seafood Industry
- \$5.2 million for Headstart (to match Federal Funds)
- \$5 million for Senior and Disability Grants
- \$15 million for reimbursement for in-home personal assistant

Elections

There are two important elections as we move into May: First, the Anchorage Mayoral Runoff election will determine the next mayor of Anchorage. The last day to vote in the runoff is May 14th. Second, Chugach Electric is holding board elections open to all member-owners through May 17th.

Always representing your interests!



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