

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

HOUSE FINANCE:
Operating Budget Co-Chair



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

REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

Date: May 14th, 2025

To: Midtown Community Council

From: Representative Andy Josephson

Re: May Legislative Session Update

Hello Community Council members,

With just one week left, the end of the regular session (Day 121 is May 21st) looms over our business here in the Capitol. Key legislation, such as the operating budget and permanent education funding increase, have made their way through one or both bodies. My goal is to deliver meaningful change to Alaska, whether that be through the budget or legislation, before we adjourn.

Budget

The Senate made significant changes to the operating budget that the House passed over to them a few weeks ago. Between our budgets, there is a difference of \$384 million in Unrestricted General Funds. The main differences are:

- One-Time funding for the Base Student Allocation adjusted down from \$256 million (\$1000 BSA increase) to \$172 million (\$680 BSA increase).
- Permanent Fund Dividend payout adjusted from \$949.7 million (approximately \$1400 PFD) to \$685.3 million (\$1000 PFD).
- Rejected most of the Governor's amendments, rejected House additions, and made

further cuts to the base totaling \$176.2 million.

- Added \$58.9 in fire suppression and disaster relief funding.

We will address these differences when we go to Conference Committee.

Conference Committee

What is the Conference Committee? The Conference Committee is a committee that address differences between two versions of a bill. In this instance, the bill in question is the operating budget (HB 53/HB 55). The committee is comprised of three members from both bodies. The specific differences (like funding for a program or personnel positions) are negotiated between the two bodies, and then they are voted on during the conference committee meeting. Two of the three members of each body must vote in the affirmative for the agreed upon choices for the differences to be resolved. At the end, the House and the Senate finalize their agreement and bring a new negotiated version of the budget back to their respective chambers for a final vote. The product is then delivered to the Governor for signature.

My team and I will be involved and working vigorously during the conference committee process to find resolution so that we can avoid the need for a costly special session. The House and Senate have maintained a positive working relationship this year, and I believe our two bodies will be able to find common ground.

Education Funding

As you are probably already aware, the Governor vetoed HB 69 and the legislature failed to override. HB 69 would have permanently increased the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by \$1000, infusing over \$250 million into our public education system. The BSA has not received an inflation adjustment for over 10 years, and a \$1000 BSA increase would have been a modest increase achieving only a little over half what the school districts requested. To override a Governor's veto takes 2/3rds of all members, and the House and Senate minorities did not want to permanently increase the BSA without also including Governor priorities.

In response, the Senate amended HB 57 to include a BSA increase and other policy priorities of the Governor. It has six main components (in addition to the bill's original goal of regulating the use of cellphones in schools):

- Increases the BSA by \$700
- Increases pupil transportation by 10%
- Simplifies the process to renew charter schools
- Directs school boards to accept charter school applications year-round

- Authorizes the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development to gather data on students' post-graduation from an Alaska high school.
- Establishes a Legislative Public Education Task Force

The bill passed both bodies with more than enough votes to signal an override when the Governor inevitably vetoes the bill. I will proudly vote to override.

Personal Legislation

Three pieces of my legislation are making their way through the House: HB 23, HB 24, HB 25. Two are awaiting to be scheduled on the House Floor and one is expected to pass out of House Judiciary before the end of session.

HB 23- Applicability of Human Rights Commission: Non-profits in Alaska are not subject to investigation by the Alaska State Commission on Human Rights (ASCHR) for discrimination in the workplace. While the federal government restricts non-profits from discriminating against employees based on a variety of factors, and the State of Alaska can investigate employers for discrimination, the state does not have a law on the books to fold non-profits into the definition of "employer." HB 23 would put that law on the books.

This bill is being heard on the House Floor today.

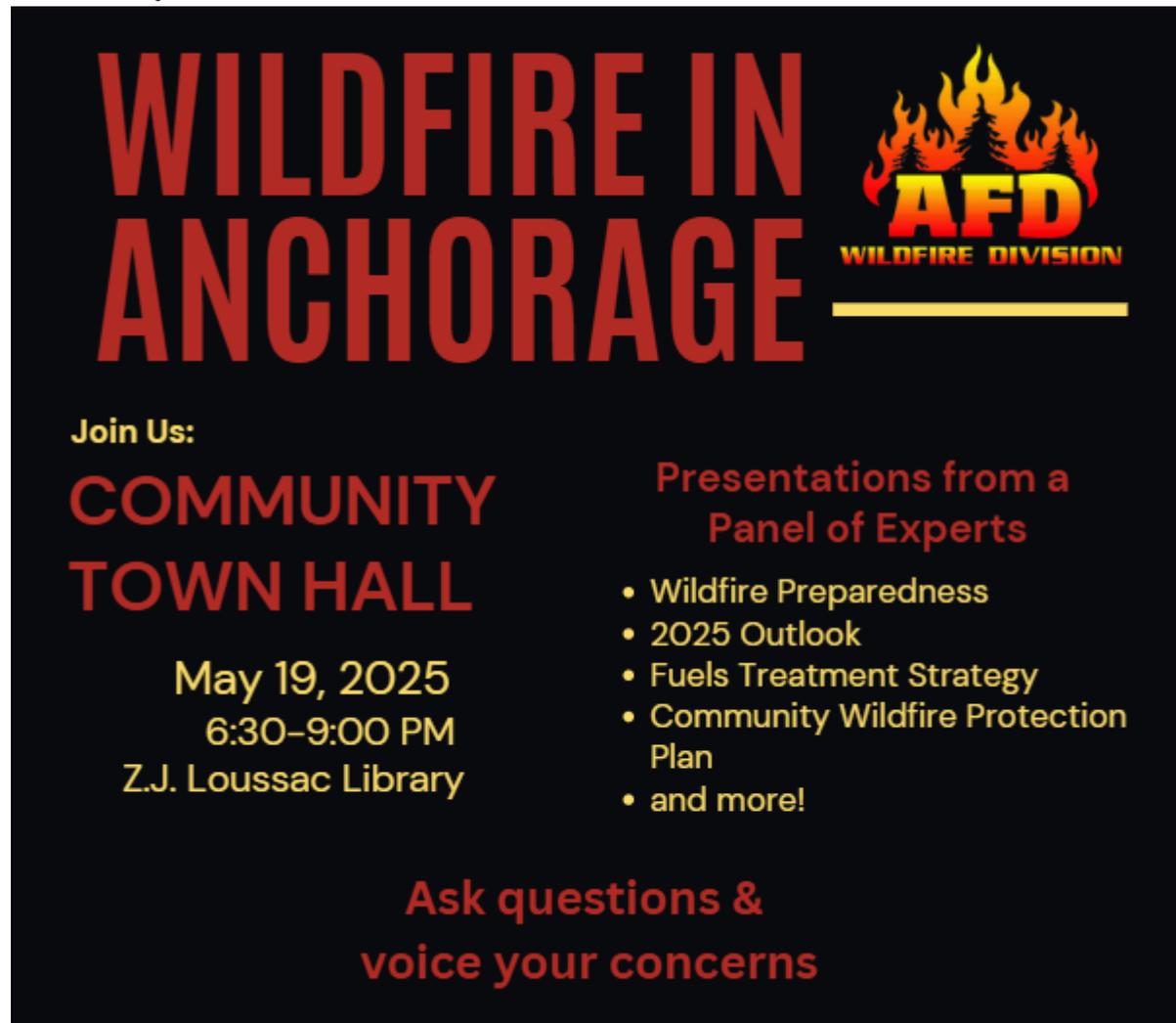
HB24- Aggravating Factors Considered at Sentencing: This bill was heard in House State Affairs on Tuesday, May 13 and will be heard in House Judiciary on Friday, May 16, 2025, for the second time. HB24 would add "sexual orientation or gender identity" to the list known as "hate crimes." Presently, the list includes the victim's race, sex, color, creed, physical or mental disability, ancestry, or national origin. Amending AS 12.55.155(c) to include "sexual orientation or gender identity" would send a powerful message that Alaska rejects crime motivated by hate, and that we as a state are willing to punish it accordingly.

An amendment deadline was set, suggesting the bill could move out of committee before the end of session.

HB 25- Disposable Food Service Ware: Polystyrene (Styrofoam) containers are toxic to the environment and can take 100s of years to decompose naturally. HB 25 would disallow the use of polystyrene containers for restaurant take-out and encourage alternative choices. Macroplastics and microplastics are increasing our risk to cancer and disease, producing awful amounts of waste that ends up in our oceans. This bill is a small, but important, step in the right direction.

The bill awaits scheduling on the House Floor.

Community Event:



WILDFIRE IN ANCHORAGE



Join Us:

COMMUNITY TOWN HALL

May 19, 2025
6:30–9:00 PM
Z.J. Loussac Library

Presentations from a Panel of Experts

- Wildfire Preparedness
- 2025 Outlook
- Fuels Treatment Strategy
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- and more!

Ask questions & voice your concerns

Closing

I want to convey my deep appreciation to House District 13 for electing me to be your representative once again. Know that I will continue to work tirelessly for you. My office doors are always open to address your questions, concerns, or anything else you need. Call my staff at (907) 465-4939 to schedule an in-person or teleconference appointment. Looking forward to hearing from you!

Take care,

Andy Josephson