

Senator Gray-Jackson's Notes
Midtown Community Council
May 8, 2025

Education Funding:

Since the veto override failed, there is a new Education Funding bill, **House Bill 57**, that recently passed both the Senate and House. This new funding bill has a BSA increase of \$700, as well as comprehensive policies that both bodies were able to get behind. HB57 is now on its way to the Governor, and we are looking forward to him signing this vital piece of legislation into law that will provide relief to the school districts across the state and protect the future of education in Alaska.

Legislative Updates: Progress on Key Bills

- **SB40** – A bill that would designate Sep. 15 – Oct. 15 of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month, passed the Senate unanimously and is awaiting passage in the House. This bill would not be a paid holiday, but rather a recognition of the contributions to our state from members of our various Hispanic communities.
- **SB103** – A bill that would require Certified Nurse Assistants in Alaska get training for signs of dementia and Alzheimer's. Alaska's population is aging and arming our nurses with the knowledge and expertise to help deal with the terrors of dementia and Alzheimer's is the least we can. This bill received two hearings in the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee before being put aside for a future hearing. I look forward to continuing to advocate for this bill, which can help with the quality of life for patients of dementia and Alzheimer's.
- **SJR8** – International Relations with Taiwan has passed the Senate and is now awaiting passage in the House. Alaska had a trade office in Taiwan for years, which promoted the relationship between Alaska and Taiwan, specifically in sales of seafood and other industries, as well as promoting the ongoing relationship between Taiwan and Alaska tourism. This resolution became an idea I was willing to focus on after a trip to Taiwan, where I met with government leaders last summer who stressed how important it is to have this trade office reinstated in Taipei.
- **SCR4** – This is a resolution to recognize and raise awareness by designating May 2025 as Mental Health Awareness Month, and Tardive Dyskensia Week

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from May 4-10. This resolution passed the Senate unanimously and is awaiting passage in the House. Talking about mental health issues is the most essential way to make our residents of Alaska feel seen and heard. Over 100,000 individuals in Alaska each year face a form of mental health issues, this resolution simply lets our residents know that we support them.

- **Other Updates** – My other key legislative priorities are moving through committee but taking a back seat to the important topics of Education Funding and the State Budget. I anticipate having more bill updates before the end of session.

Operating Budget Updates –

The Alaska Senate approved a balanced and transitional operating budget for FY 2026.

The budget:

- Secures essential state services.
- Prevents unsustainable draws from savings.
- Establishes a \$150 million buffer for FY 2027 fiscal challenges (\$300–\$600 million projected shortfall).
- Demonstrates commitment to long-term financial stability and preparation for future fiscal difficulties.

Makes targeted investments in:

- Education
- Public safety
- Health care
- Maintains spending control amid declining state revenues.
- Sets the Permanent Fund Dividend at \$1,000, costing \$685 million.
- Budget is \$1.7 billion less than the Governor's proposed budget.
- Does not require use of the Constitutional Budget Reserve (CBR), the state's rainy-day fund.

Next steps:

- Moves to the Alaska House of Representatives for a concurrence vote.
- The conference committee will be appointed to reconcile differences between House and Senate versions.

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Interim is almost here!

The session ends on May 21st and my staff, and I will be back in the Anchorage Office continuing to “*represent your interests!*” As we transition from Juneau to Anchorage, look for us on June 2nd!!

Your input and engagement are vital to the legislative process. Please feel free to call in and testify in support of my bills and other bills offered by the Legislature.

Always representing your interests!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elvi Gray-Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Interim: 907 269-0174 Session: 907-465-4930

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