



REPRESENTATIVE MATT CLAMAN

End of Session Newsletter

September 2019

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The first regular session of the 31st Alaska State Legislature has come to an end. This year's budget process is a reminder of the power of public participation. After hearing from thousands of Alaskans who contacted legislators and voiced their concerns about the budget, including hundreds from West Anchorage, Governor Dunleavy "rolled back" several of his earlier vetoes. Moving forward, continuing this active civic engagement will help our community as we work to build a strong future for Alaska.

Supporting this renewed interest in public participation is essential: participating in community councils, meeting with local and state elected officials, and getting friends and family involved. Please continue to let us know the questions, concerns, and priorities for you and your family. I always welcome the opportunity to hear from you.

Sincerely,

"The thousands of emails, phone calls, and letters I've received are valuable reminders of why I remain committed to working together to strengthen our economy, maintain essential services, pay a responsible dividend, improve public safety, and ensure the budget is in keeping with a responsible action plan for Alaska. - Rep. Claman on the governor's budget vetoes.

Responsible Action Plan for Alaska

The amount of this year's PFD was a primary issue for the legislature. We focused first on passing a responsible budget to avoid a government shutdown and provide Alaskans certainty in the critical services they rely on. After the governor's most recent vetoes, cuts to the operating budget combined with the \$1,600 PFD (costing approximately \$1 billion) and a \$300 million draw from the Constitutional Budget Reserve (CBR) to create a budget surplus of \$145.7 million. The governor views this year's PFD as "unresolved" and plans to call a third special session to address the \$3,000 PFD he promised voters in 2018. The majority of members of the legislature, the only branch with the authority to appropriate funds under the Alaska Constitution, do not support a larger dividend. Discussions continue in the legislature and in the community about whether we should change the statutory dividend formula.

Positive Steps by the Legislature

Legislature Defends Education Forward Funding

Last year, the legislature forward-funded public education for the last fiscal year (FY19) and the new fiscal year (FY20) with the passage of House Bill 287. This year, there is a dispute between the governor and the legislature about last year's forward funding of education for this year. While there is precedent for forward funding, the governor nevertheless claims it is unconstitutional and refused to distribute the funds. In response, the legislature sued the governor to require forward funding. The governor is distributing funds on a monthly basis during the lawsuit.

I continue to support forward funding education as a part of a long-term fiscal plan because it gives schools and teachers the stability and funding they need to educate our children.



Rep. Claman attends the West-Romig Library Grand Re-Opening in 2018.

Budget

FY 2020 Operating Budget: House Bill 2001

While the governor approved HB 2001 and accepted the \$1,600 PFD, he made over \$200 million in line item vetoes. With Anchorage declaring a civil emergency and Moody's revising Alaska's financial outlook from "stable" to "negative," these vetoes are likely to hurt our economy, increase crime, and damage our communities.

Restored Funding

Below is a summary of restored funding:

- **Alaska Legal Services Corporation** — \$759,100
- **Senior Benefits** — \$20.7 million (and \$800,000 for FY19 shortfall) to provide cash benefits to low income seniors
- **University of Alaska** — \$110 million (a \$25 million overall budget reduction)
- **State Council on the Arts** — \$3.8 million
- **Human Services Matching Grants and Community Initiative Grants** — \$2.2 million for homeless shelters and housing services
- **Permanent Fund Dividend** — \$1 billion to pay \$1,600 PFDs to eligible Alaskans

Vetoed Funding

Below is a summary of vetoed funding:

- **Village Public Safety Officers** — (\$3 million)
- **Civil Air Patrol** — (\$250,000)
- **Department of Law** — (\$524,800)
- **Public Defender Agency** — (\$399,700)
- **Courts** — (\$334,700)
- **Therapeutic Courts** — (\$124,000)
- **Medicaid Funding** — (\$50 million)
- **Medicaid Adult Dental** — (\$27 million)
- **Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grants** — (\$6.1 million)
- **Adult Public Assistance** — (\$7.5 million)
- **Public Broadcasting** — (\$2.7 million)
- **Alaska Marine Highway** — (\$5 million)
- **School Bond Debt Reimbursement** — (\$48.9 million)

Passed Legislation

House Bill 49: Crime Bill

In passing HB 49, the legislature and the executive worked together to improve public safety. Key features of HB 49 include: increased sentencing ranges, stronger penalties for drug dealers and distributors, additional tools to prosecute theft crimes, fewer limits on theft sentences, closing sex offender and sex offender registration loopholes, elimination of the marriage defense to rape, and improved reporting on sex offenses. While HB 49 is a positive, bipartisan step, there is more work to do to improve public safety and make wise use of our public safety resources. In particular, there is bipartisan support to invest in rehabilitation, treatment services, education, and training. Unfortunately, the governor vetoed the \$10 million capital budget investment in more treatment facilities to help Alaskans struggling with drug and alcohol addiction. Moving forward, I will continue working with my colleagues to make Alaska a safer place for all.



Rep. Claman speaks on a panel during a crime listening session.

House Bill 12: Protective Orders

In *Whalen v. Whalen* (2018), the Alaska Supreme Court ruled that victims of domestic violence are unable to get an extension or renewal for an existing protective order based on the same incident of violence as the original order, even if they are still in fear of their perpetrator. HB 12 gives victims the ability to request an extension of a protective order for an incident of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking if the victim remains in fear of their perpetrator—an important tool for victims and victim advocates.

House Bill 14: “Schneider Fix”

HB 14 addresses loopholes in state law highlighted by the sentencing in the Justin Schneider case by: (1) classifying unwanted contact with semen as “sexual contact” in Alaska’s sexual assault statutes; (2) classifying strangulation to the point of unconsciousness as assault in the first degree; (3) adding an aggravator to Alaska’s felony assault statute when the defendant knowingly caused the victim to become unconscious; and (4) adding requirements to notify victims of all sex crimes, not just victims of felony sex crimes.

Senate Bill 89: Legislative Ethics

SB 89 clarifies problems that emerged after passage of House Bill 44 in 2018. The Select Committee on Legislative Ethics advised that legislators could not even speak with constituents about legislative matters if the legislator has a “substantial financial interest.” By clarifying expectations for legislators regarding conflicts of interest, SB 89 strikes the proper balance between preventing legislators (or their spouses) from benefiting in their personal lives from actions taken as elected officials while still allowing legislators to represent their constituents on issues important to Alaska.

Earthquake Assistance

“I’ve heard from many in our community whose homes sustained substantial damage after the November 2018 earthquake. While I’ve introduced legislation to make state disaster relief grants more accessible to Alaskans, in the meantime, Alaskans impacted who still have unmet needs may apply for reconsideration for State of Alaska individual assistance at [ready.alaska.gov](https://www.ready.alaska.gov). The application period for reconsideration ends Sept. 30 at 11:59 PM.”

- Rep. Claman



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Capital Budget

Senate Bill 2002 funds the capital budget, funds new public safety laws, and reverses the Constitutional Budget Reserve (CBR) sweep. Unfortunately, the governor vetoed important funding, including capital matching grants for statewide addiction treatment facilities, homelessness assistance, earthquake monitoring, and the Interior gas project. Below is a summary of restored funding (funds not vetoed by the governor):

- **K-12 Major Maintenance** — \$7.4 million
- **Jewel Lake Rd. Sand Lake Elementary Safety Lighting** — \$484,000
- **Statewide Deferred Maintenance** — \$10.7 million
- **Community Block Grants** — \$60,000

Let's Keep in Touch!

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My staff is ready to help
you:

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between you & your legislators

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Answer questions related to
state agencies

Work on neighborhood
concerns