



HOUSE ORGANIZATION

Last week I joined with Representatives from across the political spectrum to form a 25-member House Majority organization. In an effort to set aside partisan differences and bring together a coalition capable of passing a responsible budget, I dropped my party affiliation and was elected Speaker of the House. Our organization includes 15 Democrats, 2 Independents, and 8 Republicans, and I am grateful for *all* our members' willingness to set aside a host of personal priorities in order to protect the Alaska economy and Alaskans' access to healthcare, education, and public safety.

THE BUDGET

This week, the Alaska House Finance committee held its first official hearing on the Governor's budget. Major components include:

- Approximately \$1 billion in UGF cuts, including:
 - \$309 million from K-12 and early childhood education (23% cut)
 - \$337 million from Health and Social Services (29% cut)
 - Would cost Alaska double because of an even greater amount of lost Federal funds
 - \$123 million from the University of Alaska (41% cut)
 - \$64 million from the Alaska Marine Highway (74% cut)
- \$460+ million tax increase on mostly rural local governments (none from Anchorage)
- Eliminates the Power Cost Equalization endowment, the Higher Education Fund, and the Community Assistance Fund
- Spends savings, including \$172 million from the Statutory Budget Reserve and \$250 million from the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority
- Spends \$1.9 billion on a ~\$3,000 PFD

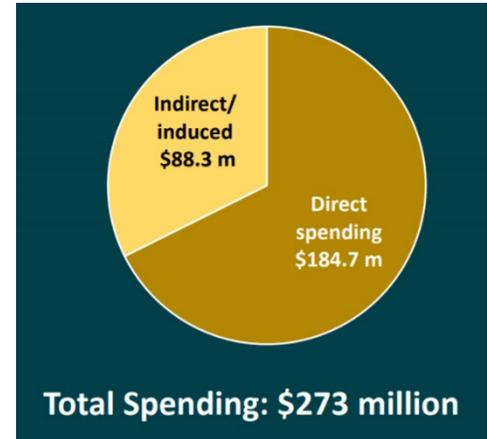
This budget would be a disaster for rural Alaska, close schools, bankrupt local governments, and reverse Alaska's economic growth at a time when we are just coming out of a recession.

In the informational hearings on the Supplemental Budget the House held over the past couple weeks, it was disappointing to hear that neither the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) nor the Department of Education had bothered to consult with School Districts regarding the potential impacts on districts of a mid-year budget cut of \$20 million.

Unfortunately, that trend continued with the full budget, it seems there has been little analysis of what the impacts on individuals, families, communities, or the broader economy of the proposed cuts would be. Instead, we have been repeatedly told that it isn't the administration's responsibility to examine the impact of cuts, just to propose a budget with a full dividend.

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY – ECONOMIC IMPACTS

I co-hosted an [informational hearing](#) with Representative Louise Stutes from Kodiak on the economic impact the ferry system has on the whole Alaska economy. We heard from the McDowell group, a Juneau based economic research firm, about how the money the State of Alaska invests in the ferry system returns 1,700 jobs and more than double our investment in direct and induced spending around the State. Fishermen able to ship their catch on ferries instead of planes can keep more of their sales than if they are paying to ship their catch by air, tourists who ride ferries stay in Alaska longer and get further off the beaten path, boosting local economies on and off the road system. In a variety of ways, the ferry system adds additional value and/or reduces costs for numerous sectors and communities across our State.



If the Governor's budget were to pass, it would end the ferry system as we know it. I will be working hard to ensure that doesn't happen.



The Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB) held their annual Mega Meeting and celebrated their 50th Anniversary in Juneau. Several members of the board visited my office to discuss legislative priorities and concerns. Pictured from left are: Joe Bereskin, Maude Blair, Alberta Unok, Paul Hansen, Robert Clark, Representative Bryce Edgmon, Keja Whiteman, and William Duskin.

Contact my office by phone at: (907) 465-4451

SENATORS VISIT

This week both Senator Lisa Murkowski and Senator Dan Sullivan gave their annual update to the Alaska legislature.



Members of the Alaska House Majority leadership team meet with the Senators in the Speaker's Chambers. Above, from left: Rep. Neal Foster, Rep. Chuck Kopp, Rep. Jennifer Johnston, Rep. Tammie Wilson, Senator Lisa Murkowski, Rep. Bryce Edgmon, Rep. Louise Stutes, Rep. Steve Thompson.



Above, from left: Rep. Steve Thompson, Rep. Neal Foster, Rep. Jennifer Johnston, Senator Dan Sullivan, Rep. Tammie Wilson, Rep. Chuck Kopp, Rep. Bryce Edgmon

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PEBBLE MINE

The US Army Corps of Engineers released a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Pebble mine this week. That triggers a 90-day public comment period from March 1, 2019 through May 31, 2019 and a series of public hearings around the district. You can view the draft EIS, submit comment, and find the schedule of hearings at: <https://www.pebbleprojecteis.com/>

HEARING SCHEDULE:

Naknek	Monday, March 25, 2019	3:30 PM - 7:00 PM	Naknek School
Kokhanok	Tuesday, March 26, 2019	3:30 PM - 7:00 PM	Community Building/Hall
Newhalen	Wednesday, March 27, 2019	3:30 PM - 7:00 PM	Newhalen School
Igiugig	Thursday, March 28, 2019	3:30 PM - 7:00 PM	Igiugig School
New Stuyahok	Friday, March 29, 2019	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Community Building
Nondalton	Monday, April 8, 2019	3:30 PM - 7:00 PM	Tribal Center
Dillingham	Tuesday, April 9, 2019	4:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Elementary School
Homer	Thursday, April 11, 2019	3:30 PM - 9:00 PM	High School
Anchorage	Tuesday, April 16, 2019	12:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Dena'ina Center

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