

INSIDE:

2018 SESSION WRAP-UP FROM REPRESENTATIVE BRYCE EDGMON



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

For many years I have been grateful to work for House District 37 as your representative, and for the past two years it has been my honor to serve as the first ever Alaska Native Speaker of the House. During this time, the bi-partisan Alaska House Majority Coalition I lead has worked steadfastly on behalf of rural and urban Alaskans alike.

I am proud of our success this legislative session to ensure that state services and programs received the right level of funding to be of real value to you. We spearheaded the increase of your PFD to \$1600 for 2018, \$500 more than last year's. Fighting crime and drug abuse and making our communities safer were also among our highest priorities, and we added more than \$34 million to these efforts. Plus, we successfully increased K-12 Education funding by \$20 million for the coming school year and by \$30 million for 2020.

Please look inside to see more about my work to improve the safety, quality of life, and economic wellbeing for our towns and villages. And as always, never hesitate to contact my office with any concerns you might have or if you have a problem I can help solve.

Wishing everyone in House District 37 a safe and productive summer,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryce Edgmon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**CONTACT YOUR
STATE
REPRESENTATIVE!**

***HOUSE SPEAKER
BRYCE EDGMON***

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***WE WANT TO HEAR
FROM YOU.***



Speaker Edgmon presiding over the House
during a floor session this year.

REPRESENTATIVE BRYCE EDGMON'S

FROM THE CAPITOL

SESSION-END REPORT

Spring 2018

Larger PFDs, Safer Communities, Better Funded Schools

Passing budgets on time requires finding middle ground. No lawmaker enjoys compromising on the goals they have for the state and for the district they serve, but I'm proud that the House raised the dividend to \$1600, and that we increased funding for our schools, for safer towns and villages, for fish & game management, and more.

Also, I'm pleased that a tone of integrity, trust, and cooperation this session helped lead to its successful conclusion well within our Constitutional deadline.

Some Operating Budget and Capital Budget highlights:

- As I mentioned above, the FY19 Operating Budget **guarantees a \$1600 PFD for this year**, increased by the Alaska House Majority Coalition to **\$500 more than what the Senate put forward**.
- We also **strengthened the sustainability of the dividend program** by passing SB 26, which puts a cap on how much we can spend from the fund's earnings for essential services **like crime fighting, roads and airports, and good schools for our children**.
- In passing SB 26 we also reduced the annual deficit from almost \$2.5 billion down to \$700 million. This is a big step toward **getting Alaska back in the black and revitalizing our economy**.
- To make communities safer and healthier, we **increased spending for public safety priorities by \$34 million**. There will be more state trooper travel to rural towns and villages and more prosecutors—including a statewide drug prosecutor—to bring criminals to justice.
- We added **nearly \$1 million to restore important commercial fisheries management** projects in ADF&G. All are aimed at increasing fishing opportunities—and boat earnings—in several regions. In District 37, this increase funded projects in the Chignik and Bristol Bay salmon fisheries and the Togiak herring fishery.
- **K-12 Education** funding includes **an additional \$20 million for FY19 and \$30 million for FY20**. Also, to help schools better plan their annual budgets and avoid the chaos of spring lay-off notices for teachers, we early-funded the coming school year and forward funded the year after that.
- The University also saw the first increase in funding in years, with an addition of \$10 million for FY19.
- We did right by our elders by appropriating **\$19 million to continue the Senior Benefits program**, which helps more than 12,000 low-income seniors across Alaska.
- We put **\$20 million into the Alaska Marine Highway System Fund**, giving the ferry system a stable funding outlook through 2020.
- **More than \$8 million to the Bristol Bay School District for major maintenance & upgrades**.
- \$1 million for **Senior Citizen Housing**
- \$3 million for the Supplemental Housing Development program
- **\$2.25 million for Teacher, Health Worker, and Public Safety Employee Housing**
- **\$6 million for the Home Weatherization Grant program**
- \$19,600 for the **Adak hydro power generator**.
- **\$12 million for a multi-year effort to increase substance abuse treatment**.
- \$4 million for additional **Village Safe Water and Wastewater Infrastructure** projects.

Endowment Fund Finances PCE Program, Community Assistance, and More

In 2016 a bill sponsored by Sen. Hoffman passed that allows money from the Power Coast Equalization Endowment Fund to be put toward additional uses when the annual earnings surpass those needed fully fund the PCE program

This past year the fund did very well, providing not just all the funding needed for PCE but also enough to appropriate \$30 million for Community Assistance payments across the state. The legislature put an additional \$4 million into the budget to bring Community Assistance to a total of \$34 million for FY19.

Additional surplus earnings of \$11 million were put toward the Alaska Energy Authority's Rural Power System Upgrades program, and another \$11 million was appropriated to AEA Renewable Energy Project grants.

These are great examples of how the PCE Fund can be fully utilized in years when its earnings are strong.

Edgmon Bills Focus on Local Government Wellbeing and Safer Schools

HB 267—Helping Local Governments with their Revenues

I drafted this bill to give our municipalities that levy taxes on fish and game guiding activities access to records that guides submit to state agencies. This gives local governments, **such as the Lake & Peninsula Borough**, a tool to help confirm that such activities subject to taxes within their jurisdictions are being accurately reported to them. All information released to municipalities would remain confidential, with strict criminal consequences for any unlawful disclosure.

Lake & Pen estimates that it's losing between \$50,000 to \$100,000 each year in unpaid guiding taxes, so HB 267 has the potential to make a solid **positive impact on borough finances**.

HR 7—Resolution for Safer Schools

This session I worked with the House Education Committee to introduce this resolution, which supports both statewide and local efforts to make our schools safer for our kids.

HR 7 supports the Dept. of Education's plans for a **statewide school safety convention**. It encourages all 54 school districts in Alaska to participate in this and other coordinated efforts to implement culturally appropriate measures that prioritize student safety and **school environments where students have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive**. It also endorses enhanced mental health and support services, including nurses, counselors, school psychologists, and public safety officers, to help create the positive and nurturing social and emotional school environment.



On the last day of session, Speaker Edgmon's fellow legislators presented him with a portrait of him with his youngest daughter, Emma.

Other Notable Bills Passed During the 30th Legislature

HB 56—Commercial Fishing Revolving Loan Fund

This bill **increases the borrowing limit from \$100K to \$200K for vessel purchases, existing vessel upgrades, gear upgrades, and the purchase of new engines for improved fuel efficiency** through the state's resident-only low-interest loan program. The total loan limit for these loan categories is also increased from \$300K to \$400K. (The overall cap on loans from the Commercial Fishing Revolving Loan Fund remains at \$400K.)

Notable Bills, Continued...

HB 135—School Construction Grant Program.

This extends the time given to school districts to raise matching funds for state school construction grants from three years to five years. Given that it is often challenging for school districts to gather the necessary matching funding, this bill will be very helpful in rural communities.

HB 111—Ending Oil Tax Credits

This bill revised our tax regime and successfully eliminated expensive, unsustainable tax credits for oil companies. A bill passed this year (HB 331) to pay off the remaining cashable credits through bonding, at no interest cost to the state, will stimulate job creation and exploration for oil while putting this issue behind us once and for all.

SB 202—ANCSA Contaminated Lands, by Sen. Hoffman

Sen. Hoffman's Senate companion to HB 367, which I co-sponsored in the House, amends state law so that an Alaska Native corporation is not liable for containment, removal, or remediation actions if the contamination occurred on the land before it was transferred under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. This legislation provides important legal protection to Native corporations while efforts are on-going to persuade the federal government to clean up those lands that were contaminated before they were conveyed under ANCSA.

HB 106—Alaska Civil Legal Services Fund

HB 106 provides a consistent funding mechanism for Alaska Legal Services by allowing the Legislature to appropriate 10 percent of court filing fees to the non-profit annually. This will amount to about \$300K per year. Legal Services provides attorneys to Alaskans who otherwise could not afford them. The work it does is fundamental to the principle that every American should have access to the justice system, not just those who can afford a lawyer.

HB 212— REAA and Small Municipal School District Fund

This bill adds school major maintenance to the purposes for which money from the fund can be used. This should allow the state to more quickly address the backlog of school maintenance needs in some rural regions while still also making appropriations available for new school construction.

HB 236—Extends the Senior Benefits program until the year 2024.

This program provides modest monthly payments to low income elders throughout the state. For many of our seniors, it is essential income to help them pay for groceries, heating, and prescription medications.

SB 92—Derelict Vessels Bill

This bill will help coastal communities and communities on navigable rivers avoid huge liabilities that come with vessels that are abandoned in or nearby their harbors. It puts in place measures that better document ownership and responsibility while also raising funds that can be put toward dealing with abandoned vessels.

HB 78—Indigenous Peoples Day

HB 78 establishes the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples Day. Coinciding with Columbus Day, the October Monday now also recognizes, honors, and celebrates the first people of Alaska and the Americas.

HCR 13—Establishing the Al Adams Committee Room

HCR 13 names the House Finance Committee room in honor of former representative and senator Al Adams, who passed away just a few years ago. Al Adams was a champion for the people of rural Alaska and one of the most influential lawmakers in our state's history. He was the driving force behind creation of the Power Cost Equalization Program and always fought for balanced funding between rural and urban Alaska. Al was chairman of the Finance Committee in the House, and he understood Alaska's finances better than any lawmaker I have ever met, which makes it fitting that our future budgets will be developed in a room that bears his name.

HB 410—Reinstatement of Native Corporations

Unfortunately, it has not been rare for small ANCSA village corporations to miss filing biennial reports to the state and subsequently become involuntarily dissolved. HB 410 would allow any currently dissolved village corporations an opportunity to become reinstated with all the important advantages that come with incorporation under ANCSA.



**PEOPLE &
PLACES
2017 & 2018
SESSIONS**

