



REPRESENTATIVE MATT CLAMAN

End of Session Newsletter

June 2020

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The second regular session of the 31st Alaska State Legislature has come to an end. This year, the legislature passed the state's operating and capital budgets, House Bill 205, in record time. After 68 days of work, we approved a budget that protects essential services and provides frontline emergency responders with tools they need to keep us healthy. As we monitor the response to COVID-19, we want to ensure that resources are in place to allow Alaska's economy to reopen in a safe and effective manner. The legislature will reconvene as necessary to maintain our commitment to Alaskans across the state. 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,

"At a time when oil prices are dropping, our friends and neighbors are facing numerous hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we need to work together as Alaskans, these divisive line-item vetoes are shortsighted and could damage our economy and quality of life for years to come." - Rep. Claman on the governor's budget vetoes.

Responsible Action Plan for Alaska

In March, the legislature agreed to a budget compromise, House Bill 205, that provides critical funding for Alaska to effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, ensures essential services will continue in the upcoming fiscal year, and funds a \$1,000 Permanent Fund Dividend. Additionally, the legislature approved the FY2020 supplemental budget, House Bill 234, to pay expenses related to last year's wildfires, restore the governor's 2019 Medicaid vetoes, and provide state COVID-19 response funding. In April, the governor made vetoes to both HB 205 and HB 234 totaling \$271 million. The governor cut \$30 million from public schools, \$100 million in school bond debt reimbursement to local communities, \$12.5 million for the University of Alaska, ferry system funding, COVID-19 support, and over \$1 billion to inflation-proof the Permanent Fund to protect it for future generations. Like last year, the governor's priority remains paying Permanent Fund dividends without regard to the impact those decisions have on public education, public health, and public safety.

Positive Steps by the Legislature

Legislature Authorizes Emergency Relief Funds

In May, the legislature authorized getting \$1.5 billion in federal emergency relief funding into the hands of Alaskans, local businesses, communities, and nonprofits impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Communities, businesses, and families will now see millions in federal support to help us all deal with the impacts of COVID-19.



Rep. Claman hosts a Mid-Session Constituent Meeting in February with Sen. Gray-Jackson and Rep. Drummond.

The federal relief funds will be directed to many initiatives in our state, including:

- **\$568.6 million to help communities and local governments** impacted by COVID-19;
- **\$290 million for the state to provide relief to Alaska small businesses** impacted by COVID-19;
- **\$45 million to help stabilize K-12 classrooms** impacted by COVID-19;
- **\$42 million for child nutrition programs** that serve children forced out of school by the pandemic;
- **\$10 million for the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation** to help prevent homelessness; and
- **\$5 million for direct financial aid grants** to help University of Alaska students.

Common Sense Budget

FY 2021 Operating Budget:

House Bill 205

The FY2021 budget provides critical funding for the state to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, ensures that essential services will continue in the upcoming fiscal year, and funds a \$1,000 Permanent Fund Dividend.

The legislature appropriated \$4.34 billion in unrestricted general fund spending, including:

- **\$80.3 million for COVID-19 response efforts** that includes \$75 million for the Department of Health and Social Services and \$5 million for the Disaster Relief Fund;
- **\$151 million for the Alaska State Troopers** and **\$14 million for the Village Public Safety Officer program** to improve public safety;
- **\$98 million for Pioneer Homes** and **\$21 million for Senior Benefits** to make sure the elders who built our state live with dignity;
- **\$1.28 billion in K-12 education funding** to support our public school teachers;
- **\$2.2 million for Veterans Services** to support Alaska's veteran population;
- **\$54 million for the Alaska Marine Highway System** to continue ferry service to the coastal and rural communities that rely on this transportation system; and
- **Medicaid and Adult Preventative Dental** funding restored to pre-2019 veto levels, which includes \$635 million in funding for Medicaid and \$8 million for Adult Preventative Dental.

Bipartisan Legislation

House Bill 124: Electronic Documents & Notarizations

At the request of title companies and businesses involved in legal transactions with specific signature requirements, I sponsored HB 124 to establish a secure process for remote online notarization to facilitate commercial transactions throughout Alaska. The use of electronic records in commercial, governmental, and personal transactions has become increasingly prevalent in modern times. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for remote online notarization of documents to strengthen Alaska's economy in the months ahead.

HB 124 allows Alaskans to keep up with these trends and perform notarizations with greater ease. Remote online notarization is particularly useful in Alaska given the state's immense size and the fact that many of our communities are not connected by road. HB 124 is a positive and important step in making sure Alaska is ready and open for business as we move out of the coronavirus pandemic.



Rep. Claman asking questions during a House Finance Subcommittee Meeting on the Public Safety Budget.

Senate Bill 120: Alternative to Arrest/Crisis Centers/Medication

I was proud to sponsor House Bill 290 and work with the Senate to merge those provisions into Senate Bill 120. Using the provisions from HB 290, SB 120 allows the creation of crisis stabilization centers in Alaska—a much-needed intermediate treatment option for those suffering from mental health or

substance abuse crises. Crisis stabilization centers, an emerging component for improving the behavioral health continuum of care, are open 24/7, staffed by mental health professionals, and designed to provide prompt mental health evaluation and stabilization. SB 120 authorizes the Department of Health and Social Services to permit and license these centers moving forward.

In addition, the bill expands access to mental health crisis services in Alaska by authorizing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) and Physician's Assistants (PAs) to prescribe psychotropic medication to those who are involuntarily committed to state custody and are experiencing a psychiatric crisis.

Finally, SB 120 allows public safety officers, who are often the first to respond to those experiencing crisis, the option of taking those in crisis to stabilization centers as an alternative to jail or the emergency room. The crisis stabilization centers provide mental health and other services that may better address the needs of those experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis. Communities in other states that have established crisis intervention centers have found the centers improve public safety, save money, and help treat people in crisis.

COVID –19 Information

coronavirus.alaska.gov — Your first stop for the latest comprehensive information and protocols from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

cdc.gov — For the latest information from the federal Centers for Disease Control.

alaska211.org — Your free, one-stop, non-clinical resource for finding help in your community.



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Capital Budget

House Bill 205 also funds the capital budget. The legislature appropriated the funds required to receive federal matching funds and to ensure that Alaska will continue with important capital projects. Below are some highlights:

- **Village Safe Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Projects** — \$12 million UGF to leverage \$52 million in federal funding
- **DOT Highway, Airport, and Alaska Marine Highway Projects** — \$134.5 million in state funding to leverage \$876 million in federal receipts
- **Alaska Recidivism and Recovery** — \$1 million
- **Fire Risk Reduction and Fuel Brakes** — \$5 million
- **Community Block Grants** — \$60,000 UGF to leverage \$6 million in federal funding

Let's Keep in Touch!

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My staff is ready to help
you:

Facilitate communication
between you & your legislators

Research bills and issues

Answer questions related to
state agencies

Work on neighborhood
concerns

