



# REPRESENTATIVE MATT CLAMAN

End of Session Newsletter

June 2022

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## Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The second regular session of the 32nd Alaska State Legislature has finished. The legislature passed the operating and capital budgets as well as key legislation. The budget does not overdraw the Permanent Fund Earnings Reserve Account and includes a \$2,550 dividend and a \$650 one-time Energy Relief check. The budget reflects our values and takes important steps to support essential services, including public safety and public education. Recognizing concerns raised by constituents in West Anchorage and Alaskans across the state, I was pleased to vote against the \$400 million additional draw from the Constitutional Budget Reserve savings account.

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,

## Working for West Anchorage

It has been my distinct honor and privilege to serve West Anchorage over the past eight years. Working on behalf of my friends and neighbors in the legislature has been rewarding and I've learned a lot serving in the House.

My vision for Alaska remains steadfast and hopeful: Alaska needs a responsible action plan moving forward, we must improve public safety, and we must protect our constitutional rights. As we face challenges, we succeed by working together for common sense solutions that put Alaska first.

Moving forward, we welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. Please feel free to call our office at (907) 269-0130 or email us at [Rep.Matt.Claman@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Matt.Claman@akleg.gov).

*"Our majority coalition formed around a commitment to financial responsibility an not overdrawing Permanent Fund Earnings Reserve. Over the past six years, we have kept our promise to Alaskans."*

*- Rep. Claman on the bipartisan House Majority.*

# Responsible Budget

## FY2023 Operating and Capital Budget

The legislature passed a responsible budget that does not overdraw the Permanent Fund Earnings Reserve Account. Here are some highlights:

- **\$2,550 dividend** and a **\$650 Energy Relief check** to help those struggling with high fuel prices and inflation;
- **\$2.4 billion** will remain in our **FY22 savings accounts**, with **\$1.1 billion in the Statutory Budget Reserve** and **\$1.2 billion in the Constitutional Budget Reserve**, helping us prepare for reduced revenue when the price of oil drops;
- **\$711 million** to **forward fund K-12 education**;
- **\$395 million** to refill the **Higher Education Investment Fund**;
- **\$2.5 million** for **Pre-Kindergarten**;
- Paid the formula amount for **FY23 school bond debt reimbursement** and **Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAA)** and repaid the previous years' amounts that were reduced or vetoed, totaling **\$299 million** for school bond debt, and **\$117 million** for REAA;
- Added seven **Alaska State Troopers**, primarily in rural areas;
- Increased funding for the **Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**;
- Increased pay for **Alaska's Village Public Safety Officers**;
- Funded **raises and bonuses for prosecutors** and professionals in the criminal justice system;
- **\$200 million** for the **Port of Alaska** (\$100 million is contingent on Anchorage securing matching federal funds);
- **\$3 million** for **Anchorage trails**, including the **Long Trail** and **Crow Pass**; and
- **\$960,000** to Volunteers of America for **school-based mental health services**.

# Public Safety Legislation

## Resources for Prosecutors

The legislature passed House Bill 226, legislation that provides a 15% pay increase for prosecutors and other lawyers, and a 10% increase for all judicial employees. HB 226 also provides a 5% salary increase for all exempt and partially exempt staff in all three branches of government.

The Department of Law has high vacancies and extremely high turnover rates. No matter how many police and investigators we have to investigate crimes, we still need a full team of prosecutors in court. The recruiting and retention crisis means we're not prosecuting cases. The pay raises will help hire and retain experienced prosecutors for Alaska.



*Rep. Claman asking questions during a House Finance Budget Subcommittee meeting.*

I was proud to sponsor House Bill 416, which allows the legislature to appropriate funds for one-time retention bonuses for certain nonunion employees—including prosecutors and criminal justice professionals.

## Crisis Intervention

House Bill 172 establishes crisis residential centers and crisis stabilization centers in



*Rep. Claman speaking on the House Floor.*

Alaska. HB 172 establishes an alternative placement option for individuals experiencing mental and behavioral health crises. In 2020, our office assisted in passing legislation that established crisis stabilization centers—a much-needed intermediate treatment option for those facing mental health crises. An emerging component for improving behavioral health care, these centers are open 24/7, staffed by mental health professionals, and designed to provide prompt mental health evaluation and stabilization.

HB 172 builds off existing legislation by increasing the number of beds available for treatment and helping our public safety officers focus on crime prevention while emergency healthcare professionals focus on Alaskans in need. Major health care providers in Alaska are already moving forward with setting up these facilities. This legislation is the next step in addressing the mental and behavioral health needs of every Alaskan.

### **Sexual Assault**

House Bill 325 significantly updates Alaska’s sexual assault and consent laws. The laws are updated so that “no” means “no.” Previously, Alaska’s statutes required the use of force or threat of force for an unwanted sex act to be considered sexual assault. HB 325 uses an updated, relevant definition of consent that matches society’s standards. Consent means “a freely given, reversible agreement specific to the conduct at issue.” Other significant changes in the legislation include: criminalizing revenge pornography as a domestic violence offense and criminalizing “rape by fraud.”

## **Personal Legislation**

### **House Bill 62: Marriage Witnesses and Consent**

House Bill 62, legislation sponsored by my office, addresses archaic child marriage statutes and modernizes Alaska’s marriage statutes to keep Alaska open for business. HB 62 eliminates child marriage in Alaska for anyone under 16. Minors who have reached the age of 16 or 17 may only marry if the other party to the marriage is not more than three years older. In addition, a minor may only marry if (1) they are an emancipated minor; (2) they have parental consent and court approval; or (3) they have court approval after the court finds that the parents are arbitrarily and capriciously withholding consent, absent or otherwise unaccountable, in disagreement among themselves on the question, or unfit to decide the matter.

Additionally, HB 62 modifies the two witness requirement for wedding ceremonies and reduces it to one witness to help support Alaska’s destination wedding industry while preserving the integrity of marriage.

### **House Bill 99:**

### **Physical/Occupation Therapy Board/ Practice**

House Bill 99, legislation sponsored by my office, amends and updates the governing laws for physical therapists, physical therapy assistants, occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants practicing in Alaska. The legislation makes changes designed to bring Alaska statutes in line with national standards and improves the administrative experience for these professionals.



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## Ranked Choice Voting

Alaskans approved Ballot Measure 2 in 2020. Now, statewide elections are ranked choice voting. This change includes the upcoming special election for Alaska's congressional seat and the November regular election.

In ranked choice voting, voters rank candidates in order of preference instead of choosing only one. Voters may rank all candidates, but are not required to do so. Voters are encouraged to rank the candidates who they would like to see in office. Ballots are counted in rounds. If a candidate gets 50% plus one vote in the first round—they win. Candidates are eliminated until two candidates remain and the candidate with the most votes wins.

## Let's Keep in Touch!

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Give us a call or stop by  
the office any time!

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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