



Senator Cathy Giessel

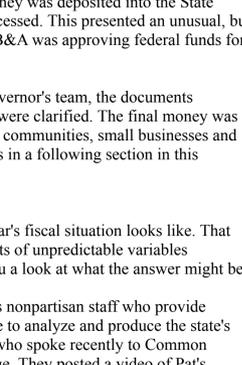
District N

Northeast Anchorage, Anchorage Hillside, Indian, Bird, Girdwood and Portage

May 12, 2020

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Federal funds, providing financial relief to Alaska communities, small businesses and individuals was approved on Monday, May 11, in a 4-hour meeting.



The Legislative Budget and Audit Committee is made up of 10 members, 5 Senators and 5 House members. It is bipartisan and alternates the chair position between the House and Senate every 2 years. When the Legislature itself is not in session, the LB&A Committee can accept federal funds for State of Alaska programs that are in place and are already utilizing some federal funding for their operations.

This year, the federal COVID-19 money was deposited into the State Treasury after the Legislature had recessed. This presented an unusual, but not unheard of, situation in which LB&A was approving federal funds for the Governor's proposed programs.

After legislators worked with the Governor's team, the documents describing the Governor's proposals were clarified. The final money was approved and is on its way to Alaska communities, small businesses and citizens. A summary of the funding is in a following section in this newsletter.

Fiscal Situation

A constituent asked me what next year's fiscal situation looks like. That requires a long answer! And it has lots of unpredictable variables connected to it! But I am offering you a look at what the answer might be.

The Legislative Finance Division has nonpartisan staff who provide services necessary for the Legislature to analyze and produce the state's budgets. The Director is Pat Pitney, who spoke recently to Common Ground, an organization in Anchorage. They posted a video of Pat's presentation that really summarizes the state's fiscal condition well. [Click here for a link to the presentation.](#)

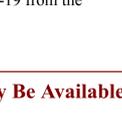
I will continue to send newsletter updates as issues arise. As always, I welcome your comments and concerns.

In today's newsletter you'll find:

- [Legislature Delivers \\$1 Billion to Communities & Small Businesses](#)
- [Respond to the 2020 Census!](#)
- [COVID-19 Updates from Dept. of Labor & Workforce Development](#)
- [Extended Benefits May Be Available to Eligible Workers](#)
- [Alaska Coronavirus Response Hub](#)
- [Alaska State Parks Seeks Volunteers for Campgrounds](#)
- [Glenn Highway Capacity Improvement, Phase II](#)
- [SWS Offers Free Summer Disposal Passes in Support of Citywide Cleanup](#)
- [Oil Prices - Permanent Fund - Stock Market](#)

Kind regards,
Cathy

[Click here to email me.](#)



Legislature Delivers \$1 Billion to Communities & Small Businesses

The state Legislative Budget & Audit Committee delivered \$1 billion to Alaska communities, small businesses, fisheries, and airports from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act yesterday.

We're in the midst of an unprecedented public health and economic crisis. A record number of Alaskans are out of work, businesses are shuttered, and a shadow of uncertainty lingers over the global economy.

The committee approved spending proposals through the Revised Program Legislative (RPL) process, including:

- \$568.6 million for community assistance
- \$290 million in grants for small businesses
- \$50 million for fisheries
- \$49 million for the statewide aviation and rural airport system
- \$10 million for homeless assistance
- \$1.4 million to offset waived Measurement Standards and Commercial Vehicle Compliance fees
- \$1.2 million to ensure continued operation of the Whittier Access Tunnel
- \$465,000 to cover Northern Region Highways & Aviation personnel costs on the Dalton Highway

To view more details about the RPLs approved in yesterday's meeting, [click here.](#)

[Click here to read the full press release.](#)

Respond to the 2020 Census!

It's not too late to respond to the 2020 Census! The U.S. Census Bureau will restart its efforts to reach residents without a listed physical address, as well as continuing door-to-door canvassing after hand delivery of census materials was halted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Census Bureau teams have been trained to observe social distancing and will follow federal health and safety guidelines. The agency will also be using protective equipment while distributing census materials to households.

If you haven't already responded to the 2020 Census, it is very brief and only takes a few minutes. **It is super easy and there are less questions than on your PFD application! It's important every person is counted because federal funding for many crucial programs relies on this data.**

[Click here to visit the U.S. Census Bureau website.](#)

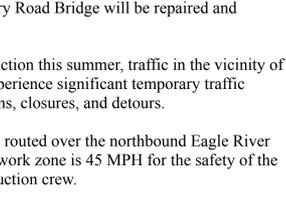
COVID-19 Updates from the Dept. of Labor & Workforce Development

Below is a link to a letter providing updates on COVID-19 from the Department of Labor & Workforce Development.

[Click here to view the letter.](#)

Up to 13 Weeks of Extended Benefits May Be Available to Eligible Workers

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) announced last week that up to 13 weeks of Extended Benefits (EB) will be available to eligible workers receiving regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits.



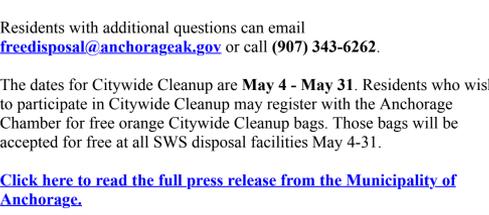
Alaska's insured unemployment rate of 5.93 percent exceeded the threshold to trigger EB for a period of at least 13 weeks. Unemployed workers who exhaust their regular UI benefits may be eligible for an additional 8 to 13 weeks of benefits. Division of Employment and Training Services will notify potentially eligible workers by mail. Individuals with remaining balances of regular UI will continue to draw regular benefits until those benefits are exhausted. Upon exhaustion, workers will be able to submit an application for EB to continue their benefit payment.

Individuals wishing to apply for EB should contact their nearest UI Claim Center by dialing (907) 269-4700 in Anchorage, (907) 451-2871 in Fairbanks, (907) 465-5552 in Juneau or toll free at (888) 252-2557 from all other areas.

[Click here to read the full press release from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.](#)

Alaska Coronavirus Response Hub

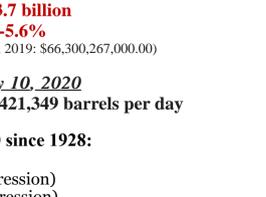
I am often asked about our supply of ventilators and hospital beds. The Alaska Coronavirus Response Hub webpage has data on hospitals including inpatient bed capacity, ICU bed capacity, ventilator capacity, as well as the number of inpatient and ICU beds and ventilators that are available. This information is updated daily.



[Click here to visit the Alaska Coronavirus Response Hub website, and scroll down to view the Hospital Data Dashboard.](#)

Alaska State Parks Seeks Volunteers for Campgrounds

Alaska State Parks is struggling to find the volunteers it typically recruits to maintain its campgrounds. Due to travel restrictions, those who typically come from out-of-state to fill the volunteer positions are unable to travel to Alaska, leaving campgrounds across the state potentially without hosts.



Campground volunteers are sometimes who live in RVs or sometimes cabins at the campground and spend their summer monitoring visitor activity, welcoming visitors and generally helping to maintain the site. Hosts are paid a stipend, the value of which varies depending on location. There are still many campgrounds across Alaska that still have host positions open.

Volunteers typically arrive the weekend prior to Memorial Day weekend to receive some basic training. Then hosts are on duty through Labor Day weekend.

The Alaska State Parks trails and facilities continue to get a lot of use, and data from the Department of Natural Resources shows that revenue from usage fees was far more last month in comparison to April 2019. Across the state, there's been a roughly 30% to 40% increase in park use compared with this time last year.

This information is cited from an article in the [Fairbanks News Miner](#) on May 6.

[Click here for more information about campground host positions from the Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation.](#)

Glenn Highway Capacity Improvement, Phase II (Eagle River Bridge)

The Glenn Highway Capacity Improvement Project is now in full swing. Crews are working hard to build the new southbound bridge over Eagle River and to finish the Eagle View frontage road.



When the project is complete this fall, drivers will have more driving lanes and less congestion, and an improved southbound highway. Road grades will improve and ramp access to the highway will have smoother traffic flow.



View of how the Glenn Highway and frontage roads over Eagle River will look when the project is complete.

The bridges will be built to current seismic standards and have capacity to add a lane to serve future growth. Additionally, the previously damaged girders on the Artillery Road Bridge will be repaired and replaced this summer.

To make room for road construction this summer, traffic in the vicinity of the Eagle River Bridge will experience significant temporary traffic adjustments with lane reductions, closures, and detours.

Glenn Highway traffic is being routed over the northbound Eagle River Bridge. The speed limit in the work zone is 45 MPH for the safety of the traveling public and the construction crew.

During 2020 construction, traffic cannot use the southbound bridge because the current southbound bridge will be used to build the new bridge. Additionally, earthworks at the site of the current southbound bridge will build the road up as much as 30 feet to create new road-approach banks.

[Click here for more information about the project.](#)

Visit [AlaskaNavigator.org](#) for construction information.

SWS to Cancel Free Dump Days and Offer Free Summer Disposal Passes in Support of Citywide Cleanup

In response to the COVID-19 emergency, the Department of Solid Waste Services (SWS) will not host Free Dump Days in 2020.



The Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Citywide Cleanup is from May 4-31.

SWS and the Chamber recognize the important role Free Dump Days and Citywide Cleanup play in keeping Anchorage safe and beautiful. To maintain physical distancing requirements for staff and residents, SWS will instead distribute free summer disposal passes to all Municipality of Anchorage residents.

- Residents can register at [www.muni.org/sws](#) for a pass that allows them disposal of one free load of garbage. **Registration opened on Monday, May 4 and closes at midnight Monday, May 18. Passes will be valid through Sept. 5, 2020.**
- All free drop-offs must go to the Anchorage Regional Landfill in Eagle River. Passes will not be accepted at the Central Transfer Station in Midtown Anchorage. **Girdwood residents may use passes at the Girdwood Transfer Station.**
- Only current residents of the Municipality of Anchorage may register for a free pass. Passes are limited to one per resident.
- Loads are limited to less than 1,000 pounds and may not exceed the size of a standard pick-up truck bed. No U-Hauls or Double Axel trailers will be eligible for free disposal.
- Additional fees will still apply for any item containing Freon (refrigerators, freezers) or to disposal of more than 40 pounds of household hazardous waste.

Residents with additional questions can email freedisposal@anchorageak.gov or call (907) 343-6262.

The dates for Citywide Cleanup are **May 4 - May 31**. Residents who wish to participate in Citywide Cleanup may register with the Anchorage Chamber for free orange Citywide Cleanup bags. Those bags will be accepted for free at all SWS disposal facilities May 4-31.

[Click here to read the full press release from the Municipality of Anchorage.](#)

Oil Prices - Permanent Fund - Stock Market

May 11, 2020
ANS Crude Price: **\$26.16 per barrel**

Fiscal Year 2020 to date:
-\$41.39
-61.27%

(ANS price, June 28, 2019: \$67.55)

Permanent Fund Value: **\$62.57 billion**

Fiscal Year 2020 to date:
-\$3.7 billion
-5.6%

(PF value, June 30, 2019: \$66,300,267,000.00)

May 10, 2020
ANS Production: **421,349 barrels per day**

10 worst years for the SP 500 since 1928:

1. 1931: -47.07% (Great Depression)
2. 1937: -38.59% (Great Depression)
3. 2008: -38.49% (Great Recession / Housing Bubble)
4. 1974: -29.72% (Oil crisis)
5. 1930: -28.48% (Great Depression)
6. 2002: -23.37% (Dot-Com Bubble)
7. 1941: -17.86% (Great Depression)
8. 1973: -17.37% (Oil crisis)
9. 1940: -15.29% (Great Depression)
10. 1932: -15.15% (Great Depression)

2020: -11.16% (so far, 5/12/2020)

It's a pleasure to serve and represent the wonderful people of District N!

I look forward to hearing your ideas, suggestions and comments.

[To email me, click here.](#)

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