



Interim Report
by
Senator Gary Stevens

Hello again. After our regular session and special session in Juneau, it has been nice to spend some time at home in Kodiak and catch up with some of you in person. I plan to visit other District P communities over the remaining months of the interim and look forward to seeing you then.

PFD Special Session Later this Month

Just ahead for the Legislature is a special session to settle the amount of this year's Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD). As you probably know, the governor is asking the legislature to approve a record-high \$3 thousand PFD (following the statutory formula). A full PFD carries a price tag of nearly \$2 billion. Many in the legislature favor a lower PFD amount to ensure the program's sustainability well into the future, while also allowing us to continue funding for Alaska's core services without spending our remaining savings or instituting new taxes.

Legislative leaders have asked us to convene the special session at the Capitol building in Juneau on Monday, July 8th. Additional hearings will take place at the Anchorage Legislative building. Coverage of these meetings will be able through Alaska's public television's Gavel Alaska, which can also be found on the Internet at: <http://www.360north.org/>.

(The amount of the PFD has greatly varied since the first dividend of \$1 thousand in 1982. It has been as low as \$381 in 1984 and as high as \$2,072 in 2015. In the dividend era, the state's population has grown from a little over 400 thousand residents in the early 1980s to about 737 thousand last year.)

Governor's Budget Cuts

The upcoming special session comes on the heels of the governor's \$440 million cuts to the FY '20 operating budget on Friday, June 28th. The governor's vetoes are in addition to \$190 million in budget cuts already enacted by the legislature during this year's session.

A total of 182-line items in the budget were either cut or reduced by the governor. Included in the vetoes was a \$130 million cut in state funding to the University of Alaska system; a cut of \$50 million for municipal bond debt reimbursement; \$50 million in cuts to Medicaid; \$30

million in cuts in community assistance payments to municipalities; and a cut of \$20.8 million and the elimination of the Senior Benefits Program; and \$6 million in cuts to the Village Public Safety Officer program.

These cuts are devastating to so many, particularly low-income Alaskans who rely on Medicaid for health care, our senior citizens, non-profit agencies, the University of Alaska and its students. At the local level, we will likely see property taxes rise, and increased pressure on municipal governments to fill the void left by reductions in state funding.

Thank you to those who have taken the time to share your concerns on the vetoes with me. Legislators are reviewing these cuts and trying to determine whether 45 of the 60 lawmakers will support veto overrides. We will know soon.

(You can find out more about the governor's budget cuts online at: <https://omb.alaska.gov/fiscal-year-2020-enacted-budget>.)

Serving the State

Congratulations to Anchor Point's Nona Safra on her appointment to the Statewide Independent Living Council. Her term started last month.

Currently, many District P residents serve Alaska as members of various state boards and commissions that consider a wide range of issues. If you have the time and interest, I encourage you to lend your expertise to our state through service on one of these panels.

You can find out more online at: <https://gov.alaska.gov/services/boards-and-commissions>. Or call them at (907) 269-7450.

Census Workers Sought

The federal government is looking for workers to assist with the 2020 Census. The jobs pay between \$28 and \$31 per hour.

You can find out more online at: 2020census.gov/jobs or call 1-855-562-2020.

Preparation work for next year's census is already underway. The population count will determine Alaska's share of more than \$675 billion in federal funding each year. The census also will be utilized in determining the new boundaries for Alaska's 40 House and 20 Senate districts beginning with the 2022 elections.

Here to Help

Senate District P's offices are open throughout the interim. Please give us a call if we can be of assistance to you with issues involving the State of Alaska.

You can reach the Capitol office in Juneau at (907) 465-4925 or toll free at 1-800-821-4925.

My Homer office can be reached at (907) 235-0690.

You can contact the Kodiak office at (907) 486-4925.

E-mail me at Sen.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov

My interim address is:

Senator Gary Stevens
305 Center Ave, STE 1
Kodiak, AK 99615

Help with the Federal Government

Should you need help with federal government matters, I advise you to contact the members of Alaska's Congressional Delegation.

Senator Lisa Murkowski's Anchorage office can be reached at (877) 829-6030.

Senator Dan Sullivan's Anchorage Office can be reached at (907) 271-5915.

Congressman Don Young's Anchorage office can be reached at (866) 990-5979.

Thank you for reading this month's column, and thanks again to our local media for their assistance in sharing this information with you.