



Capitol Report for February 19, 2019
By
Senator Gary Stevens

Hello again from Juneau. As always, there is a lot going on in the Capitol, but the topic getting the most attention is, of course, the budget.

On Wednesday, February 13th, Governor Dunleavy unveiled his revised budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2020. In keeping with his campaign promise to not institute a broad-based tax, to reduce state government spending to match incoming revenues, and to fund the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) using the historical formula, the budget calls for a cut of \$1.6 billion. This would result in an FY '20 budget of about \$11 billion, which includes \$1.9 billion for PFDs.

The proposed cuts touch virtually every state government agency. They include a cut of \$320 million to the Department of Education; a cut of \$134 million (41 percent) in State support for the University of Alaska; a cut of \$781 million from the Department of Health and Social Services; and a cut of \$96 million in the Alaska Marine Highway System's budget, while also ending the run from Kodiak to Unalaska.

I have been joining the Senate Finance Committee as it goes through the budget proposal item-by-item with the administration. Additionally, I serve as a member of the Finance Committee's Budget Subcommittees on Education, the University of Alaska, and Judiciary. We are raising our concerns, seeking answers from the administration, and by no means are rubber-stamping the budget.

There is a long way to go in the budget process, and part of it involves your input during public comment periods in both bodies' Finance Committees. You can get more information on the Finance Committees' schedules online at: <http://akleg.gov/index.php>, or from the Legislative Information Office near you.

The Cordova LIO can be reached at 424-5461 and by email at LIO.Cordova@akleg.gov

The Homer LIO can be reached at 235-7878 and by email at LIO.Homer@akleg.gov

The Kenai LIO can be reached at 283-2030 and by email at LIO.Kenai@akleg.gov

The Kodiak LIO can be reached at 486-8116 and by email at LIO.Kodiak@akleg.gov

Thanks to all who have already taken the time to share their thoughts with me on the budget. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Personal Legislation Update

Senate Bill 22 passed out of the Senate Resources Committee on Monday, February 11th. The bill has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee for further consideration. Passage of the bill will allow large-scale enhancement projects for shellfish. Currently, all such projects are permitted under a research permit and are of limited size and scope.

I have introduced legislation requiring the University of Alaska Board of Regents to present an biannual report to the legislature on the status of the national, regional, and programmatic accreditation status of the university. Senate Bill 53 also asks the Regents' report to detail the efforts the university has made to achieve and maintain accreditation.

SB 53 is currently in the Senate Education Committee, which I Chair. The bill gets its first committee hearing on Thursday, February 21st.

For more information on these bills and any of my personal legislation, please contact my office.

Ethics Committee Opening

The Select Committee on Legislative Ethics has a vacancy for an alternate public member. Public members are selected by the Chief Justice of the Alaska Supreme Court and ratified by two thirds of the full membership of the legislature. Public members serve a three-year term.

If you are interested in the public member position, send a letter of interest along with a resume to:

Chief Justice Joel Bolger
Alaska Supreme Court
303 K St.
Anchorage, AK 99501

Include your political party affiliation as noted on your voter registration on file with the Alaska Division of Elections.

You can learn more about the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics at <http://ethics.akleg.gov/>.

PFD Reminder

The 2019 Permanent Fund Dividend application period is going on now through Sunday, March 31st. The easiest way to apply is via the PFD Division's website at www.pfd.alaska.gov. If you are applying by mail, please send your application by certified mail and request a return receipt for your records.

Constituents in the Capitol

I had the chance to visit with numerous District P residents during their recent visits to Juneau. Among them were students from Chenega and Seldovia, who were participating in the Close Up program; school board members from around the district; emergency service personnel from the Kenai Peninsula; and senior citizens program advocates from Kodiak and Homer.

Before you head to Juneau this session, please give our office a call so we can find time to meet. My phone number in the Capitol is 1-800-821-4925, or (907) 465-4925.

Kodiak Open House

House District 32 Representative Louise Stutes and I are hosting an open house from 11 am to 1 pm on Thursday, February 28th at our downtown Kodiak offices (305 Center Avenue). I hope you will have the opportunity to join us at that time for an update on our work in Juneau.

As time permits, I plan to visit other communities around our Senate District during the session.

Thanks for reading the Capitol Report. Please keep in touch.