



Senator Cathy Giessel

District N

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

May 27, 2020

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

It is good to see the streets busy again every morning with people going to work.

Though students aren't in school, the Anchorage School District has options for summer learning. [Click here to see what would fill the needs for your student.](#)

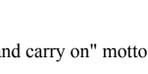
Lots of bears and moose roaming around District N so be aware on the trails.

In today's newsletter you'll find:

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Kind regards,
Cathy

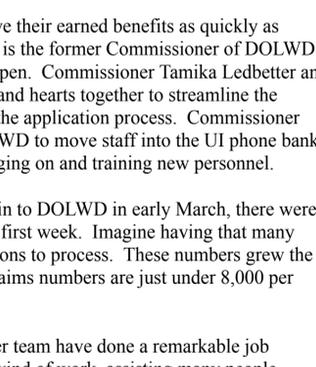
[Click here to email me.](#)



Thank You and Recognition Deserved for Jobs Well Done

Healthcare

Many healthcare providers have contacted me regarding mandates that have limited restrictions, and payment reimbursement for services.



I thank the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and Commissioner Adam Crum, who have quickly responded to resolve the challenges.

First - dentistry. Working with the Board of Dental Examiners, the very restrictive mandate has been modified to allow dentists and their teams to use professional judgement and careful precautions in providing dental care to Alaskans. I was particularly glad to see the nasal swab testing requirement removed for pediatric dental care. Non-urgent elective surgeries and procedure limitations were modified. This is good news. Good dental hygiene is critical to the health of the entire body.

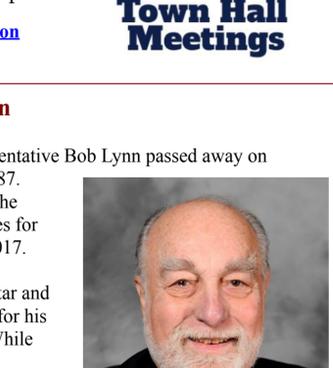
Next - healthcare providers have to be paid for their services. Behavioral health providers were experiencing problems with an insurance company and Medicaid payment. Again, thank you to DHSS for investigating and identifying the problem, then initiating corrective measures for a processing bottleneck.

Also - Pharmacists, often the first point of contact for many, were able to provide COVID testing, vaccines, and various other services, but were unable to be reimbursed by Medicaid like other medical providers. DHSS found a remedy for this disparity and has implemented temporary provisions for pharmacists during the pandemic.

Thank you, Commissioner Crum, for your "keep calm and carry on" motto and managing the enormous work of this pandemic.

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

Several constituents have contacted me over the past weeks, experiencing problems connecting with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) to apply and qualify for Unemployment Insurance (UI).



It was the intention of the Legislature that Alaskans receive their earned benefits as quickly as possible. Senator Click Bishop is the former Commissioner of DOLWD and knew how to make this happen. Commissioner Tamika Ledbetter and Senator Bishop put their heads and hearts together to streamline the efficiency and effectiveness of the application process. Commissioner Ledbetter restructured the DOLWD to move staff into the UI phone banks and application assistance, bringing on and training new personnel.

When UI claims began to pour in to DOLWD in early March, there were about 14,000 new claims in the first week. Imagine having that many phone calls and online applications to process. These numbers grew the next couple weeks. The new claims numbers are just under 8,000 per week now.

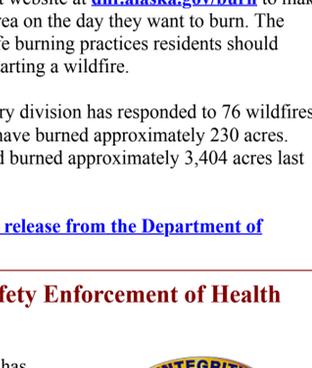
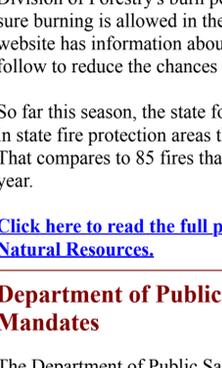
Commissioner Ledbetter and her team have done a remarkable job managing this hurricane-force wind of work, assisting many people, individually and personally. I have forwarded some requests to her, which have been quickly handled.

The Legislature, with the guidance of Senator Bishop's expertise, immediately expanded UI coverage for Alaskans. Congress added funds to it.

Thank you Commissioner Ledbetter and your hard-working team.

Memorial Day

The Memorial Day event at the Veterans' Memorial on the Park Strip in Anchorage was a great event. It was organized by a group of citizens and, as such, would be a tradition worth continuing.



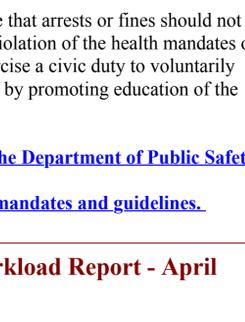
COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall Meetings

Governor Dunleavy will be having several virtual town hall meetings regarding COVID-19. The meetings will be streamed live on Facebook and on the [Governor's Livestream page](#).

When:

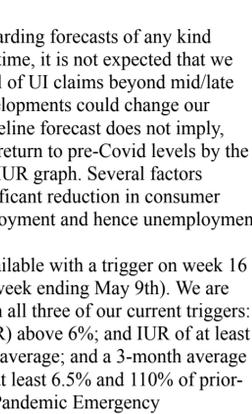
- Thursday, May 28 - 5:30pm
- Tuesday, June 2 - 5:30pm
- Thursday, June 4 - 12:00pm

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



Remembering Bob Lynn

Former Anchorage-area Representative Bob Lynn passed away on Monday, May 25, at the age of 87. Representative Lynn served in the Alaska House of Representatives for nearly 14 years from 2003 to 2017.

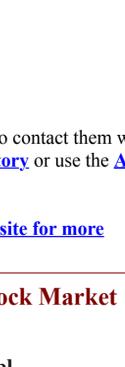


Bob was awarded the Bronze Star and Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry for his service in the U.S. Air Force. While serving in the Alaska House of Representatives, he was chair of the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee from 2005 to 2006 and the chair of the State Affairs Committee from 2007 to 2016.

Governor Mike Dunleavy has ordered that all Alaska state flags fly at half-staff starting at sunrise on Wednesday, May 27th through sunset on Thursday, May 28th 2020 in honor of Representative Lynn.

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.



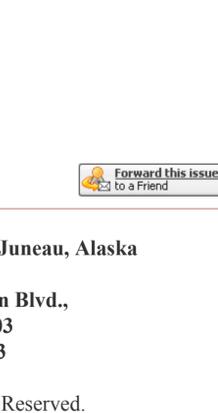
Census Bureau teams have been trained to observe social distancing and will follow federal health and safety guidelines. The agency will also be using protective equipment while distributing census materials to households.

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.](#)

End to Burn Suspension, Except on the Kenai Peninsula

With widespread rain last weekend reducing wildfire danger across much of the state, the Alaska Division of Forestry rescinded its near-statewide burn permit suspension everywhere **except on the Kenai**.



The burn suspensions will remain in effect on state, private and municipal lands on the Kenai Peninsula throughout June, prohibiting burning of brush piles or lawns, or the use of burn barrels, to reduce the risk of human-caused wildfires.

The division will continually evaluate conditions in specific areas to determine whether it is appropriate to allow fires, and will notify the public of any changes in its policies allowing or prohibiting burning.

Residents seeking to burn must call their local forestry office or check the Division of Forestry's burn permit website at [dnr.alaska.gov/burn](#) to make sure burning is allowed in their area on the day they want to burn. The website has information about safe burning practices residents should follow to reduce the chances of starting a wildfire.

So far this season, the state forestry division has responded to 76 wildfires in state fire protection areas that have burned approximately 230 acres. That compares to 85 fires that had burned approximately 3,404 acres last year.

[Click here to read the full press release from the Department of Natural Resources.](#)

Department of Public Safety Enforcement of Health Mandates

The Department of Public Safety has received a number of questions asking for clarification of the role of state troopers in enforcement of the Governor's health mandates. As initiation of a plan to open Alaska businesses is underway, there are questions regarding enforcement of the health mandates.

The department will continue education and working with community members. The goal is voluntary compliance, and unless circumstances are egregious, law enforcement interventions will remain limited.

The Governor and the department believe that arrests or fines should not be the standard response to a perceived violation of the health mandates or guidelines. Alaskans are expected to exercise a civic duty to voluntarily comply and for law enforcement to assist by promoting education of the mandates and guidelines.

[Click here to view the full letter from the Department of Public Safety.](#)

[Click here to view the updated health mandates and guidelines.](#)

Unemployment Insurance Workload Report - April 2020

Below you'll find the link to the April 2020 Unemployment Insurance Workload report.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development noted the following items with this report as we begin to move through the pandemic-induced labor market shocks.

1. The current level of uncertainty regarding forecasts of any kind should be well understood. At this time, it is not expected that we will continue to see the current level of UI claims beyond mid/late summer. Of course, a range of developments could change our expected trajectory. The current baseline forecast does not imply, however, that the labor market will return to pre-Covid levels by the end of the summer, reflected in the IUR graph. Several factors including, but not limited to, a significant reduction in consumer demand will likely shape both employment and hence unemployment claims for the foreseeable future.
2. Extended Benefits (EB) became available with a trigger on week 16 and first pay in week 19 (reflected week ending May 9th). We are now in an EB "ON" period based on all three of our current triggers: An insured unemployment rate (IUR) above 6%; and IUR of at least 5% and 120% of the prior two-year average; and a 3-month average total unemployment rate (TUR) of at least 6.5% and 110% of prior-year rate. This is in addition to the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program that became available with the passage of the CARES act. Both currently allow for up to an additional 13 weeks of benefits beyond the regular duration. Based on the TUR for April at 12.9% we have now entered into a High Unemployment Period (HUP) which would extend the maximum eligible duration for EB from 13 to 20 weeks. The department is still awaiting official confirmation on this.
3. For the time being, workload for both EB and PEUC will be reflected in the EB portion of the report. Both programs are currently 100% federally funded.

[Click here to view the full UI workload report.](#)

Upcoming UAF Extension Online Activities

While University of Alaska offices are closed, Cooperative Extension will offer a variety of distance-delivery programs.

There are a number of upcoming activities and workshops including topics on:

- Gardening and Agriculture
- Health
- Food Preservation and Foods
- Other Workshops
- Publications
- Kids' Activities

Faculty and staff are still working, so don't hesitate to contact them with questions. Look up contact information in [the directory](#) or use the [Ask an Expert form](#) to get your questions answered!

[Click here to visit the Cooperative Extension website for more information.](#)

Oil Prices - Permanent Fund - Stock Market

May 26, 2020

ANS Crude Price: **\$37.07 bbl**

Fiscal Year 2020 to date:

-\$30.48

-45.12%

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

Permanent Fund Value: **\$63.33 billion**

Fiscal Year 2020 to date:

-\$2.97 billion

-4.48%

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

May 25, 2020

ANS Production: **413,546 barrels per day**

10 worst years for the SP 500 since 1928:

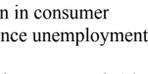
1. 1931: -47.07% (Great Depression)
2. 1937: -38.59% (Great Depression)
3. 2008: -38.49% (Great Recession / Housing Bubble)
4. 1974: -29.72% (Oil crisis)
5. 1930: -28.48% (Great Depression)
6. 2002: -23.37% (Dot-Com Bubble)
7. 1941: -17.86% (Great Depression)
8. 1973: -17.37% (Oil crisis)
9. 1940: -15.29%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

2020: -6.02% (so far, 5/27/2020)

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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