



Capitol Report
By
Senator Gary Stevens
May 26, 2020

Hello again. It is great to be back home again following a brief return to Juneau to pass House Bill 313 on Wednesday, May 20th. This critical legislation gives the governor the authority to manage and distribute \$1.5 billion in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) funding. CARES ACT funds will be distributed throughout Alaska. The bill is retroactive to May 1, 2020.

HB 313's Key Provisions

- \$568.6 million for community assistance;
- \$290 million in grants for small businesses;
- \$51.6 million for statewide aviation, rural airports and the Whittier Tunnel;
- \$50 million in grants for the fishing industry;
- \$45 million for K-12 education;
- \$42 million for child nutrition programs;
- \$29 million for rural transportation costs, including the Alaska Marine Highway System;
- \$10 million for homeless assistance;
- \$5 million for University of Alaska and its students; and
- \$3.6 million for state and local law enforcement.

Soon after HB 313's passage, the Senate formerly adjourned the 2020 session. The House of Representatives adjourned the previous day.

What's Ahead in the Interim?

It is likely the legislature will be called into special session in the fall to vote on the governor's appointments to the state's many boards and commissions. If the confirmation hearing does not occur, the governor will have to provide the legislature with a new slate of appointees next session.

We may also be called into special session to vote on budgetary and any other matters that need to be considered before the end of the year.

Of course, we will also be keeping a close watch on the impacts of COVID-19 as Alaska's economy reopens. I believe the governor is getting good advice from medical experts on reopening, and I am optimistic that Alaska has the resources and knowhow to do this safely.

July PFD Distribution

As you may have heard, the governor has moved up the distribution of this year's Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) to July. PFD payments for eligible Alaskans start Wednesday, July 1st.

The amount of this year's PFD is \$1,000.

You can check your eligibility online at: <https://pfd.alaska.gov/>

You can also call the PFD Division by phone at: 907-269-0370.

Election Information

Alaska's primary election will be held on Tuesday, August 18th. Polls will open for in-person voting from 7:00 a.m. through 8:00 p.m. on that date.

The Division of Elections will not be utilizing mail-in ballots in the August primary. If you have health concerns, I recommend your requesting an absentee ballot from the Alaska Division of Elections.

You can get more information on absentee voting, and also register to vote or update your registration online at <http://www.elections.alaska.gov>. Or call tollfree at: (866) 952-8683

How to Get Ahold of Us

We hope to safely reopen the Senate District P offices to foot traffic soon. In the meantime, please give my offices a call if we can be of assistance to you with issues involving state agencies.

Contact us in Kodiak at (907) 486-4925.

You can reach us in Homer at (907) 235-0690.

Of call us toll free at 1-800-821-4925.

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

My interim address is:

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

(Please note that we are unable to assist you with legal matters. If you have a case involving a lawsuit or pending litigation and need help finding an attorney, I recommend contacting the Alaska Bar Association at www.alaskabar.org.)

Help with the Federal Government

Alaska's Congressional Delegation can aide you with matters involving the federal government. All have offices in-state.

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

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

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

Keeping Informed

Thank you to Senate District P's media for giving me the opportunity to share information with you again this session through the Capitol Report. Thanks also to staffs of our local papers and radio stations, who are doing a tremendous job of keeping the public informed throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Thanks also to you for reading this column. Please stay safe and keep in touch.