



**Capitol Report**  
***January 20, 2020***  
**by**  
**Senator Gary Stevens**

Hello again from Juneau. Lawmakers from around the state have returned to the Capitol for the second session of the Thirty-first Alaska State Legislature. Our 90-day session runs from January 21st to April 19th. The state constitution allows for a 30-day extension.

2020 is my twentieth year in state office and eighteenth in the Senate. It has been an honor and privilege to serve you throughout that time. I look forward to working to solve the state's challenges this year.

### **Committee Assignments**

This year, I will continue serving as Chair of the Senate Education Committee. I also Chair the Legislative Council, which is a joint-committee of Senate and House members that governs the Legislature's internal business and meets throughout the year.

My Senate Finance Committee Subcommittees assignments remain the Education and Early Development, Judiciary, and the University of Alaska subcommittees. These panels meet periodically to establish budget recommendations to the full Senate Finance Committee.

### **Fiscal Year 2021 Budget**

Everyone who follows the work of the legislature knows the biggest issue facing lawmakers each year is the state operating budget. This year will be no exception.

In December, the governor announced his FY '21 budget. The plan calls for overall flat funding at about \$4.5 billion in unrestricted general fund appropriations while spending an additional \$2 billion to fully fund statutory Permanent Fund dividend payments.

With oil revenues unable to fully fund the budget, the governor is proposing a draw of \$1.5 billion from the Constitutional Budget Reserve to meet expenses in the coming fiscal year. This would leave about a half billion dollars in the account, which myself and many lawmakers believe is too great a draw, leaving us in a perilous position to meet unexpected costs.

The governor's budget is just the first step in what will be a lengthy, and likely contentious debate. The budget will be subject to much discussion and many changes along the way as legislators come up with a plan Alaska can afford.

As the legislature develops the budget, I will continue working with my colleagues to fund those programs and services critical to District P. With a collaborative approach, we can make sensible budget reductions but still fund education, ferry service, road maintenance, public safety and a sustainable Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD).

### **Let Me Know What You Think**

Your input matters to me. Please keep in touch on the budget and the many other issues coming before the legislature. If your time allows, I encourage you to add your comments to the record when bills and resolutions come before committees. The Legislative Information Office (LIO) near you will have more information on the committees' schedules throughout the session.

### **New Legislation**

Among the legislation I have introduced this year is SB 25, which extends the state's salmon and herring product development tax credit, which is set to expire this year. The bill also proposes offering similar tax credits for value-added processing in the pollock and cod industries.

I sponsored the original bill creating the Alaska Salmon Product Development Tax Credit in 2003. The program is attributed as a major factor in the increase in commercial value of Alaska salmon. Successful legislation in 2014 extended the salmon tax credits and expanded the program to include tax credits for herring value-added processing.

I am also sponsoring SB 136, which would allow tribes to operate public schools through education compacts with the state. The bill as written is just a step in the process of developing compacts. I hope to bring together educational professionals and tribal leaders to see if there is a way to do this that benefits the students.

The bill language would require the schools would have to follow most state education laws. The schools would be open to any student, but once they reached capacity, they could prioritize enrollment of tribal members. The schools could also give employment preference to tribal members.

Please contact my office with any questions you may have on SB 25, SB 136 or any other legislation I sponsor.

### **The Senate District P Staff**

Once again, my Capitol office is staffed by talented, hardworking individuals. All of them have many years of experience with our Senate District.

Tim Lamkin is back for a fourteen session with my office. He will serve as the Aide to the Senate Education Committee, as well as work on personal legislation and other duties.

Doug Letch is in his twentieth year in the office. He will again be working on constituent concerns and communications, following the Senate Health and Social Services Committee, work on my personal legislation and handle scheduling.

Katrina Matheny is also back for a twentieth year with my office. Among her many roles is serving as Aide to Leg Council and tracking the budget.

You can reach us in Juneau at 1-800-821-4925 or (907)465-4925.

Additionally, Teri Robl will be in Senate District P's Homer office throughout the year. She is available to help you with any matters involving state government. You can reach Teri at (907) 235-0690.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff if we can be of assistance to you with matters involving state agencies.

### **Other Contact Information**

My mailing address is: 120 4th Street, State Capitol, Room 3, Juneau, AK 99801.

You can e-mail me at: [sen.gary.stevens@akleg.gov](mailto:sen.gary.stevens@akleg.gov)

### **District P Legislative Information Offices**

LIOs can help you follow bills, take part in teleconferences, offer testimony on legislation and contact lawmakers throughout the session. You can also pick up a PFD application at your local LIO, and, by texting any bill number to 1-559-245-2549, the LIO will send a status update to your mobile device.

Nancy Bird staffs the Cordova LIO. She can be reached at (907) 424-5461.

Amber Corey staffs the Homer LIO. She can be reached at (907) 235-7878.

MaryBea Byrne staffs the Kenai LIO. They can be reached at (907) 283-2030.

The Kodiak LIO is staffed by Heather Fincher. She can be reached at (907) 486-8116.

### **Tracking the Alaska Legislature**

You can follow the work of the Senate Majority on the Internet at [www.alaskasenate.org/2020](http://www.alaskasenate.org/2020). The site provides much information on our efforts and our membership.

Alaska's public television system produces Gavel Alaska, which broadcasts live and recorded coverage of floor sessions and committee hearings. The programming is also on the Internet at: <http://www.360north.org/>.

AlaskaLegislature.tv offers live coverage of meetings from all of the Capitol's committee rooms. This service is provided by the legislature.

You can also access information on any bills and resolutions introduced during the 31st Alaska Legislature through the Bill Action and Status Inquiry System (BASIS) on the Internet at <http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Home/BillsandLaws>

### **PFD Application Period Underway**

You can apply for the 2020 dividend now through Tuesday, March 31st. The quickest and easiest way to apply is via the PFD Division's website at [www.pfd.alaska.gov](http://www.pfd.alaska.gov). If you are applying by mail, I highly recommend you send your application by certified mail and request a return receipt.

Thank you for reading this edition of the *Capitol Report*, and thanks to Senate District P's media for helping me keep you informed through this column.