

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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SENATOR LYDA GREEN SENATE DISTRICT G MARCH 10TH UPDATE

Forward Funding Education

In order to address the funding needs of public education, the Senate Finance Committee last week introduced a committee substitute to SB 35, an appropriations bill. SB 35 as amended provided early notification of the increased level of funding K-12 education could expect in the coming fiscal year. The proposed allocation included an additional \$82 Million for our public schools.

The bill was introduced early in session in order to address the fact that school districts must notify teachers in March and April of possible layoffs if needed funding will not be available. Early notification of funding would allow school districts to avoid this painful process altogether.

In anticipation of SB 35 passing, I introduced an amendment to SB 1 to alter the foundation formula last week. My amendment results in a Base Student Allocation increase to \$4,576 which is an increase of \$407 per student.

SB 35 unanimously passed the Senate on reconsideration March 8. The effective date vote failed 11 to 7 (requires two-thirds or 14 votes) and the Constitutional Budget Reserve vote failed 11 to 7 (requires three-quarters or 15 votes). Because the CBR sections failed to pass, SB 35 appropriates only the governor's recommended \$754,613,200 for public K-12 education and \$649,322,300 for the University of Alaska but not the increases.

The MatSu School District has indicated that SB 35 with the CBR votes and SB1 as amended, the \$407 increase to the BSA when combined with full local funding to the state cap would not only hold MatSu harmless from this year's proposed cuts, but would fund schools at an all time high. These bills and subsequent assembly action would allow MatSu to lower class sizes in middle school and have all middle schoolers get PE every single day, lower class sizes in high school and add more challenging courses for all students, add new reading programs to ensure that every single third grader is reading at or above grade level by 2006, and protect MatSu's at risk students.

In the meantime, the House has passed legislation that makes a slight increase to the education dollar but gives a huge increase to rural legislators. Special interest projects such as a \$100,000 bulldozer for Rampart, \$200,000 heavy equipment for Allakaket and \$3,400,000 for erosion control at Shishmaref—a community that has been requested to move from the current location. Below is the complete list of projects with the amounts appropriated in legislation the House passed.

Project	Amount Appropriated
City of Shishmaref erosion control	\$3,400,000
Yuut Elitnauriviat, Inc. design and construction of Peoples Learning Center	\$1,000,000
Dillingham middle school roof repair and high school gym roof repair	\$779,600
City of Craig boat haul-out	\$250,000
KTOO Broadband link & digital video server	\$165,000
City of Angoon dock and boat harbor repair and expansion	\$314,000
City of Allakaket purchase heavy equipment	\$200,000
Metlakatla Indian Community barge haul-out feasibility study	\$150,000
City of Haines Port Chilkoot dock infrastructure	\$125,000
Klukwan cultural center planning, engineering, & construction	\$120,000
Rampart purchase of bulldozer	\$100,000
City & Borough of Yakutat boat harbor facility upgrades	\$95,000
City of Kake community hall renovation	\$65,000
City of Hoonah purchase of fire equipment	\$50,000
City of Skagway sea wall and sea walk construction	\$50,000
City of Craig fish enhancement hatchery and rearing facility construction	\$50,000
City of Cordova community center construction	\$25,000
City & Borough of Yakutat teen center construction	\$25,000
City of Fort Yukon community center construction	\$25,000
City of Hydaburg heritage center engineering and design	\$25,000
Naukati West fire hall/public safety building	\$20,000
City of Tenakee Springs search and rescue equipment	\$3,500
Municipality of Anchorage transportation and other projects	\$750,000
Bristol Bay Borough community cargo dock upgrades	\$500,000
City of Togiak search and rescue equipment	\$150,000
City of King Cove power house rehabilitation	\$200,000
UA, Tanana Valley Community College renovation of the old Fairbanks Courthouse	\$1,350,000
	<u>\$9,987,100</u>

The Senate Majority wants early funding at an all time high student dollar amount—not special interest projects to buy our vote. We support education, not obstructionism.

At the local level, it is important to realize that in order to address the needs of the education community, everyone must show their commitment. The expectation that the state and the federal governments fund education at the highest level is only part of the challenge. There must be a voice and a commitment at the local level to fully fund education. This means the Assembly must commit to funding education at the Cap. Everyone must be willing to participate in the full funding of education.

Percent of Market Value Hearings:

Next week the Senate Finance Committee will be discussing the ideas discussed at the Conference of Alaskans (SJR 3 Const. Amend: Appropriation/Spending Limit, SJR 18 Const. Amend: Permanent Fund Appropriation/Inflation Proofing, SJR 19 Const. Amend. Permanent Fund, SJR 24 Const. Amend. Guarantee Permanent Fund Dividend, SJR 32 Const. Amend. Permanent Fund Income for Dividends). Although this matter is scheduled in the Senate Finance Committee, all Senators have been invited to attend and offer presentations. Hearings will run from 9AM-11AM and 1:30PM-4:00PM. We will be hearing presentations from Cheryl Frasca (Department of Revenue), Mike Burns (Conference of Alaskans), Bob Storer (Permanent Fund Corporation), as well as statewide public testimony.

Additionally, the Senate Finance Committee is conducting subcommittee meetings on department budgets even though the House has not yet transmitted their Operating Budget.

Town Meetings:

Last week I held a town meeting in Wasilla to address Education Funding and Senior Citizen concerns. I also attended the opening of the Wasilla Multi-use Sports Complex. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to meet with my constituents and address their concerns in person. I was delighted by the positive feedback and heard some great suggestions for further issues to look into. I was amazed at the Sports Complex. What an incredible undertaking. I was truly awed by the end result.

This week, I will be back in the Valley on Thursday March 11 to speak at the Alaska Family Resource Center's luncheon on the theme of "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility". After lunch I will be at the Palmer Senior Center. On Friday March 12, during lunch I will be at the Wasilla Senior Center. There have been many changes to senior programs in recent months, I look forward to hearing from our seniors and making sure their needs are being met.

Personal Legislation:

SB269 Library Records—will be heard in the House during the week of March 21st.

SB 270Avalanche Awareness Month—has been transmitted to the Governor for his signature.

SB 285 Targeted Case Management—passed out of House HESS; will be heard the week of March 21st in House Finance.

SB288 Contrary to Welfare of Child will be read on the Senate Floor on Monday.

SB 289 SESA Re-Authorization—passed House Education; will be heard the week of March 21st in House Finance.