



# Alaska State Senate

## Senate Finance Committee

Official Business

Mail Stop 3100  
State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 20, 2004  
**CONTACT:** Sen. Lyda Green, 465-6600

## Senate Finance Passes Operating Budget

### *Meets parameters set by Governor*

(JUNEAU)— The Senate Finance Committee today moved out an operating budget that reflects the Governor's recommendations while responding to concerns about the many changes to health and social services programs.

"This is a good compromise between what the people of the State have asked for and what the Governor provided for in his budget," said Sen. Lyda Green, co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee. "We have met the parameters to limit the draw on the Constitutional Budget Reserve and spend no more general funds than in the previous year, except for education and SeniorCare, which we all agree are priorities."

The \$2.3 billion Fiscal Year 2005 operating budget draws \$50 million less from the Constitutional Budget Reserve than the \$400 million cap set by the Governor. Like the House, the Senate maintains the Governor's recommended funding for an additional twenty troopers, six criminal prosecutors and six public defenders. Recognizing the increased burden on the court system, the Senate also provides the funding necessary to meet the increased caseload.

In addition, the Senate took steps to alleviate concerns raised during public testimony that some of the governor's administrative consolidation cuts in health and social services programs are too much too soon. The budget restores \$550,000 to services for the seriously mentally ill and \$905,000 to the State's first line of defense against the spread of infectious disease, the public health nursing program.

The Senate also provides \$22.7 million to capitalize the SeniorCare Program to ensure funding through 2006, when federal Medicare changes come on line.

"I think it's important that the committee process worked. This represents many hours of work among people with very different viewpoints," Green said.

Funding for K-12 public education and the University of Alaska is provided in a separate bill currently under consideration by a House and Senate Conference Committee.

From the Finance Committee, the Senate version of [House Bill 375](#) will go to the full Senate for passage. After that it will go to a Conference Committee where House and Senate Finance leaders will resolve the differences. The Senate Finance Committee also passed [House Bill 377](#), which funds the state's comprehensive integrated mental health program.

###