

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

News From The House Majority

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For Immediate Release: January 21st, 2003

House Convenes 2003 Session **Fiscal Solutions and Education Are Top Priorities**

(Juneau) – The House Majority leadership convened the 23rd Legislature with a list of responsibilities for the 2003 session. House Speaker Pete Kott (R-Eagle River) said among the most important tasks are considering solutions for the state’s fiscal problem and adjusting the state education formula.

The Speaker said the fiscal situation concerns both state spending and new revenues. The leadership said it will analyze all new revenue sources; however, it will allow the Murkowski Administration to propose any revenue solutions this session. Meanwhile the Majority plans to hold spending at a reasonable level this session.

“There’s two sides to the fiscal situation,” Kott said. “I think you’ll see new legislation that controls the amount of money we spend that allows for more efficient government.”

“The goal this session is to hold the line on or reduce state spending and make cuts in several areas,” Finance co-chair Rep. John Harris (R-Valdez) said. “But we must also deal with demands on the budget we cannot ignore.”

The leadership says it wants to look closely at the funding of Alaska’s public education. Debate continues on whether rural and urban schools offer the same quality of education. Speaker Kott said he wants to use the latest education study to further analyze the question of equal education.

“We need to ensure there will be parity among all regions and that Alaskan children will have the greatest opportunities,” Kott said. “We know not every child will go to law school, but they should begin with that opportunity.”

Kott said the leadership’s complete list of priorities is still developing and could take a few weeks to finalize.

“The opening day is clearly indicative of what direction we take the process,” the Speaker said. “We plan to work closely with the minority, the Senate and the Administration.”

For more information, contact House Majority press secretary J.D. Wallace at (907) 465-5369.

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