

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

House Majority News

web site: <http://www.akrepublicans.org>

State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801
Actuality line (800) 478-6540
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Feb. 15, 2001

Dan Saddler
Press Secretary
(907) 465-3804
CONTACT: Rep. Eldon Mulder (907) 465-2647
Rep. Bill Williams (907) 465-3424

Supplemental Budget Clears House Finance **HB 117 Provides Funds for ANWR, Gas Pipeline, Special Olympics**

(JUNEAU) - The House Finance Committee today approved a supplementary budget bill with \$4.8 million in state funds for projects including promoting oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, speeding advance work for a natural gas pipeline, hiring nurses at state Pioneers Homes and supporting the 2001 Special Olympics in Alaska.

“Supplementals are the Legislature’s mechanism for funding needs that can’t wait for the normal budget year to start in July,” said House Finance Committee Co-Chair Rep. Eldon Mulder, (R-Anchorage). “By making these modest but timely investments, we give Alaska the opportunity to earn big dividends in the future, perhaps for decades to come.”

Among the key state general fund allocations in House Bill 117:

- \$1.5 million to Arctic Power, a organization building national support for opening the coastal plain of ANWR to oil exploration and development
- \$600,000 to help state government prepare for field evaluation, planning and coordination work this summer, so agencies can quickly approve natural gas pipeline right of way and construction permits to take advantage of burgeoning demand for gas
- \$500,000 to the 2001 Special Olympic World Winter Games, to help lodge the 10,000 athletes and visitors expected to come to Anchorage in March
- \$195,000 to hire skilled nurses at the Anchorage, Juneau and Sitka Pioneers Homes, and prevent job vacancies resulting from administrative decisions to raise pay scales

Arctic Power Executive Director Cam Toohey told the committee that heightened national interest in energy issues, President George W. Bush’s support and Congressional plans for an ANWR vote within two months gives his group a narrow window of opportunity to make its case that oil development in ANWR can bring improved energy security to the country and an improved economy to Alaska.

While the governor had sought \$1.9 million for gas line preparations, the committee trimmed his request after noting that no one has yet applied for any state pipeline permits, nor even committed to either the Alaska Highway route favored by the Legislature and governor or to a northern route.

Including state, federal, and other funds, HB 117 calls for \$27.3 million in supplementary spending for Fiscal Year 2001. The bill moves next to the House Rules Committee.

###