

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

House Majority Media Advisory

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

State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
(907) 465-3804
Actuality line (800) 478-6540
Dan Saddler (907) 465-3804

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 14, 2001

Operating Budget Passes House Legislators Speak on Process, Product in Comments from Floor

(JUNEAU) – The proposed state operating budget passed today by the House of Representatives sustains most state services at current levels, while including increases in critical areas such as education, public health, and the University of Alaska, House leaders said.

Before passing House Bills 103 and 104, the vehicles for the Fiscal Year 2002 state operating budget, members engaged in far-ranging discussion on the \$4.63 billion budget and the process the House followed in crafting a spending plan to allocate limited state resources for state government services. The following is a selection of comments legislators made from the floor before casting final votes to pass the budget:

“We have displayed austerity for the past five years, and even in this budget. It is not everything that everybody wants it to be. But because of that, we’re not broke. We have options. We have the time to put forward sound thinking and a sound process in the development of a long-range financial plan. And I’m confident we’re going to do that. But we only have that ability because we have shown fiscal restraint and responsibility. It was a bipartisan effort. I appreciate that. It has produced good results for us. I think the constituents around the state of Alaska have appreciated that and I think, Mr. Speaker, that we’ve done the responsible thing once again within this budget.” - Rep. Eldon Mulder (R-Anchorage), House Finance co-chair

“The process, in my view, works. It is admittedly cumbersome, and I don’t mind that because that provides for input and opportunity for change where change is necessary. We have to have a starting point and we have to have a goal, or we will have 40 budgets and I don’t think that’s the goal of the House, so I support the budget that we’ve created here.” - Rep. Con Bunde, (R-Anchorage), House Finance Committee vice-chair

“When we first realized several years ago that we were spending too much money out of our savings account, that our recurring revenues were going down while our costs were going up - which is precisely where we are today.” - Rep. Bill Hudson, member, House Finance Committee member

(MORE)

*“There are those who would argue that we can’t cut our way out of trouble. Some of our colleagues in the Majority would agree with that. I agree. We can’t cut ourselves to safety, but we can certainly spend ourselves into oblivion. **Rep. Joe Green (R-Anchorage)**”*

*“This is a fairly good budget process that we went through. I thought we all acted very responsible, reasonable and statesmanlike. ... We only had eight amendments, but I think the first year I was here we had 180, and it lasted from 10 in the morning one day until seven in the morning the next. ... I think everybody here wants to do something probably about the alcohol tax. I don’t know how I feel about it yet because we haven’t gone through the public process. We haven’t talked about how the public feels about an alcohol tax.” **Rep. Bill Williams (R-Saxman) House Finance Committee co-chair***

*“The budget was a moving target. It was an amoeba that kept being changed and massaged and moved, and finally we came up with what we truly believe is the maximum we can afford. Now, sure, we could increase it a little bit more with a two or three hundred million sales tax, or a two or three hundred million personal income tax and those kinds of things, but what would that do? It would say, ‘O.K., we’ll raise the budget, and we’ll spend that money, and then we’re going to be right back in the same fix next year or the year after that, saying we need more money.’ We cannot continue to do that.” **Rep. Joe Green (R-Anchorage)***

*“The net result of those factors is that we’re \$34 million above where we started this year. For some that is a lot, almost more than they want to swallow. On the other hand, we’re \$60 million below what the governor requested. The result of that obviously would be the fact that our draw on the CBR (Constitutional Budget Reserve) is substantially less than what the governor projected, well below the \$530 million that he projected. So Mr. Speaker I think we’ve done a reasonable and responsible job within this budget.” - **Rep. Eldon Mulder (R-Anchorage), House Finance Committee co-chair***

###

Broadcasters note: Comments are available on the Majority Actuality Line 1 (800) 478-6540