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House Finance Passes Fast-Track Supplemental Bill Provides for Health Care, Rural Energy, Security, Tourism

(JUNEAU) – The House Finance Committee approved a fast-track supplemental spending bill today to provide health care benefits to low-income Alaskans, maintain low-cost energy for rural Alaskans, respond to threats to homeland security and bolster the state tourism industry.

“We struck a good balance between getting the money flowing to those areas that need it fast, and still making sure that we gave every request fair consideration,” said Finance Committee Co-Chair Rep. Eldon Mulder (R-Anchorage).

As passed by the Finance Committee, [SB 291](#) authorizes the state to spend \$159.2 million - \$10 million in general funds, \$116 million in federal funds, and \$33 million in other funds – for several important state functions that may have been hampered by waiting for the final budget to pass next month. The bill includes authorization for the state to spend:

- \$138.6 million in federal funds, leveraged by \$4.6 million in state general funds and \$23.9 million in other funds, to cover Medicaid expenses to provide health care for low-income Alaskans.
- \$7 million appropriation from the Power-Cost Equalization Endowment to provide funds needed to subsidize the high costs of electricity in rural Alaska, an appropriation overlooked in last year’s operating budget
- \$2.5 million in state and federal funds to cover the costs to the state’s transportation and security systems following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, including public safety personnel and improved security infrastructure at urban and rural airports; higher liability insurance costs; improved background checks on aircraft operators; bomb blast guards at Anchorage and Fairbanks international airports
- \$2 million in general funds to the ferry system to cover unexpectedly high fuel costs and fire damage
- \$2 million in general funds to the Alaska Tourism Industry Association, requiring a \$1 million match from the association, to encourage tourists to overcome travel concerns and visit Alaska.

“The fast-track supplemental is our opportunity to make any necessary adjustments in last year’s budget to address unanticipated events and situations,” said Finance Committee Co-Chair Rep. Bill William (R-Saxman). “I’m confident that the full House will consider it very favorably, and I look forward to rapid consideration and passage of the bill.”

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ATTACHMENT: Spreadsheet showing the fast-track supplemental spending by department