

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## House Majority News

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## House Budget Funds State's Top Needs

### Minority Amendments Ignore Existing Investments in Services

(JUNEAU) – Efforts by minority Democrats to add more than \$31 million to the state budget ignore the hundreds of millions of dollars already allocated for education, children, public safety and health in the proposed House operating budget bill, House leaders said today.

“It says a lot about the quality of our budget process that so many minority members admitted we’ve done a pretty good job investing state dollars where they do the most good,” said Speaker of the House Brian Porter (R-Anchorage).

As the full House took up House Bills 103 and 104, the proposed operating budget for the next fiscal year, Democrats offered but were unable to gain support for amendments to increase state spending in several areas already targeted for large budget allocations, and even increases in some key services.

“When you look at the budget we’ve brought to the House, it’s clear that we are already investing a substantial amount of resources in these critical areas,” said Rep. Eldon Mulder, (R-Anchorage), co-chair of the House Finance Committee.

A point-by-point comparison of the minority amendments places them in context of the entire budget:

- **Education:** Democrats proposed spending an additional \$6.1 million on education, though the budget already proposes spending \$823.5 million on education, including \$671 to fully fund the foundation formula, \$49.1 million for pupil transportation, and \$152.5 to improve school quality
- **University of Alaska:** Democrats proposed spending an additional \$7.2 million on the University, though the budget already allocates \$548.2 million to the statewide University system, including \$9.3 million in new state funds, and \$22.1 million in federal and other funds
- **Public Safety:** Democrats proposed spending an additional \$5.8 million, though the budget already directs \$107.1 million to public safety, including state troopers, Village Public Safety Officers, fish and wildlife protection officers, sexual and domestic violence prevention, and community jails
- **Children:** Democrats proposed spending an additional \$2.7 million for children’s services, though the budget already proposes spending \$105.2 million for early childhood development programs, child care assistance, Head Start grants, front-line social workers and subsidized adoptions

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## **Operating budget**

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- **Public Health:** Democrats proposed spending an additional \$3.1 million on public health, though the budget already allocates \$100.2 million for public health efforts, including a \$15 million increase for community health programs and public health nurses
- **Alcohol:** Democrats proposed spending an additional \$6.1 million on alcohol prevention, though the budget already includes \$40.4 million on alcohol and drug prevention services, including substance abuse treatment for drunken drivers and state inmates and direct grants to Native corporations

Many legislators, even leading Democrats, characterized the proposed budget as a sound spending plan with increased funding in areas that reflect the priorities of most Alaskans. While many legislators also acknowledged the desire for increased state services, some questioned whether Alaskans have yet decided whether they can or want to pay for such services.

“We’d like to have a cop drive past our house every hour of every day, you bet,” said Mulder. “But we try to do the best that we can with the funds we have available. That’s what we’ve done within this budget. I think we’ve done it responsively and responsibly.”

The budget bills are scheduled to come up for consideration before the full House again on Wednesday.

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