



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

34TH ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SECOND SESSION JANUARY - MAY 2026



Alaska Senate
MAJORITY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE PRESIDENT	3
SENATE BILL 1 VIA HOUSE BILL 48 – CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUND	4
SENATE BILL 8 VIA HOUSE BILL 39 - EDUCATION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING	4
SENATE BILL 10 VIA HOUSE BILL 184 – AIDEA FINANCE WORKFORCE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT	4
SENATE BILL 18 VIA HOUSE BILL 57 – CELL PHONE POLICY IN SCHOOLS.....	5
SENATE BILL 20 VIA HOUSE BILL 27 – CPR CURRICULUM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.....	5
SENATE BILL 21 – ALASKA WORK AND SAVE PROGRAM	5
SENATE BILL 23 – CIVICS EDUCATION	6
SENATE BILL 24 – INCREASING THE MINIMAL AGE FOR TOBACCO AND E-CIGARETTES	6
SENATE BILL 35 - CONTRACTOR STATUS FOR DELIVERY AND RIDESHARE DRIVERS.....	6
SENATE BILL 40 – HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH	7
SENATE BILL 41 – MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS	7
SENATE BILL 44 VIA HOUSE BILL 52 – RIGHTS OF MINORS IN PSYCHIATRIC FACILITIES.....	7
SENATE BILL 79 – PAYROLL CARD ACCOUNT.....	8
SENATE BILL 86 – MODERNIZING ALASKA’S MONEY TRANSMISSION LAWS	8
SENATE BILL 89 – PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT SCOPE OF PRACTICE.....	8
SENATE BILL 104 – VEHICLE AND BOAT TITLE TRANSFER UPON DEATH	9
SENATE BILL 118 VIA HOUSE BILL 10 – FACULTY MEMBER ON THE UA BOARD OF REGENTS.....	9
SENATE BILL 130 – EXPANDING TAX INCENTIVES TO STRENGTHEN ALASKA’S SEAFOOD INDUSTRY	9
SENATE BILL 132 – OMNIBUS INSURANCE BILL	10
SENATE BILL 146 – REAA FUND: MT. EDGE CUMBE, TEACHER HOUSING	10
SENATE BILL 164 – ELIMINATION OF OUTDATED TAX INCENTIVES.....	10
SENATE BILL 167 - RESTORING PFDS FOR WRONGFULLY CONVICTED ALASKANS	11
SENATE BILL 174 – INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT	11
SENATE BILL 178 - INFANT EARLY LEARNING EXPANSION	11
SENATE BILL 181 – IMPROVING ALASKA’S INTER-AGENCY DATA SHARING	12
SENATE BILL 187 – FOOD DYE PROHIBITION IN SCHOOL LUNCHES.....	12
SENATE BILL 191 VIA HOUSE BILL 216 – TRANSFER OF RAILROAD LAND TO WHITTIER	12
SENATE BILL 192 - EVACUATION DESIGNATION LEVELS	12
SENATE BILL 200 – FARM AND AGRICULTURAL LAND ASSESSMENTS	13
SENATE BILL 208 – AGRICULTURAL LAND LEASES.....	13
SENATE BILL 237 - ONLINE SOCIAL SECURITY CARD REPLACEMENT	14
SENATE BILL 258 – FAIR SOFTWARE LICENSING	14
SENATE BILL 272 – ALASKA HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE	14
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 17 - CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ALASKA'S REGIONAL EDUCATION ATTENDANCE AREAS	15
SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 20 – MARINE DEBRIS CLEANUP	15
SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 29 – CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISH A PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND ...	15
SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 30 – SUPPORTING MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE PARTNERSHIPS IN ALASKA	15
HOUSE BILL 28 – COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION PACKAGE	16
HOUSE BILL 78 (SENATE BILL 28) – PUBLIC EMPLOYEE DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT SYSTEM.....	17
HOUSE BILL 117 – COMMERCIAL SET GILLNET FISHING / ELECTRONIC TRAWL MONITORING BY THE HOUSE FISHERIES COMMITTEE.....	17
HOUSE BILL 263 – OPERATING BUDGET.....	18

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE PRESIDENT

As we close out the 34th Alaska State Legislature, I am proud of the work this body accomplished over the past four years. Serving the people of Alaska is both an honor and a responsibility that I do not take lightly. It takes courage, cooperation, and commitment to move this great state forward. Since the Bipartisan Majority organized in November of 2022, the caucus has focused on strengthening education, restoring retirement security for public employees, and stabilizing Alaska's long-term fiscal outlook. I am pleased that we made significant progress on each of these fronts.



We worked to reestablish a meaningful pension for Alaska's public employees. For too long, our teachers, troopers, and state workers have left Alaska in search of better benefits and greater stability. House Bill 78 created a modest, shared-risk retirement plan designed to recruit and retain dedicated public servants. In the final days of the session, the Governor, unfortunately, vetoed the bill. That will not end our efforts. The Senate remains committed to giving Alaska's public workforce the retirement security they deserve and to giving the state the ability to recruit and retain a strong, committed workforce.

That same determination drove our work in education. Last year, the Legislature established the Education Funding Task Force to evaluate policy changes and ways to more efficiently fund our public schools. Through this Task Force and our budgeting process, we invested in teachers, classrooms, school deferred maintenance, rural teacher housing, and energy assistance to address rising fuel costs beyond the state's control. As a result, we avoided losing any of the buying power gained from prior funding increases. But there were also policy changes to establish civics education and a mental health curriculum, because a well-rounded education prepares young Alaskans for college, careers, and future endeavors.

Finally, we kept our focus on ensuring Alaska's financial stability despite volatile revenue sources. During these times, it was important that we handled our budget responsibly. We balanced the operating budget at an average of \$73 per barrel of oil, just \$2 below the Department of Revenue's forecast, and set aside \$46 million for next year's additional needs. Accomplishing that fiscal discipline required the same thing that defined this session: a willingness to work together.

Throughout this session, I have been motivated by the bipartisan spirit that made progress for our state. These were not easy decisions. Restoring pensions, investing in schools, and reforming elections all required difficult conversations and compromises across party lines. But when Alaskans sent us here, they did not ask us to fight for our parties. They asked us to work for them.

I am grateful for the dedication of my colleagues, the staff who support this institution, and above all, the Alaskans who make their voices heard. Our process would not succeed without you. The past 26 years serving Kodiak in the Legislature and eight years as Senate President have truly been an honor and a privilege, and I am proud you entrusted me with that responsibility.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gary Stevens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Senate President Gary Stevens, PhD.
Kodiak, AK – Republican
Alaska Senate Bipartisan Coalition

SENATE BILL 1 VIA HOUSE BILL 48 – CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUND *by SENATORS FORREST DUNBAR, Tobin, Claman, Gray-Jackson, Kawasaki*

[Senate Bill 1](#) boosts funding for the Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC), a nonprofit that offers free civil legal assistance to low-income residents. It increases the funding cap from 10% to 25% of State Court System filing fees, returning to the original level established when the program started in 2018—before it was reduced with plans to revisit it later. Since the number of eligible Alaskans has more than doubled in the past 30 years while state funding has dramatically decreased, this increase is so significant. It helps ensure everyone in Alaska has equal access to civil justice, regardless of income.

[House Bill 48](#), sponsored by Representative Sara Hannan, was the House version of Senate Bill 1, which passed the legislature.

SENATE BILL 8 VIA HOUSE BILL 39 - EDUCATION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING *by SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON*

[Senate Bill 8](#) establishes a bill of rights for deaf and hard of hearing children in Alaska's public schools. It requires school districts to provide consistent information to parents, allows parents to choose the communication method that best fits their child, and mandates that schools deliver services and instruction using that chosen method. The bill ensures each child receives an individualized education program that identifies their primary language, accounts for their hearing prognosis, provides assistive devices, and delivers timely assessments in their primary language.

Without these protections, deaf and hard of hearing students risk missing critical classroom instruction, falling behind academically, and losing out on language development. This legislation addresses this by guaranteeing access to academic instruction, school services, and extracurricular activities in a child's primary language, including residential services for rural Alaskan students who may need them. Seventeen other states have already passed similar legislation.

[House Bill 39](#), sponsored by Representative Jamie Allard, was the House version of Senate Bill 8, which passed the legislature.

SENATE BILL 10 VIA HOUSE BILL 184 – AIDEA FINANCE WORKFORCE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT *by SENATOR FORREST DUNBAR*

[Senate Bill 14](#) expands AIDEA's mission to allow the agency to use its loan programs for the construction of workforce housing facilities containing five or more dwelling units. The bill also adds a formal definition of "workforce housing" tied to HUD's affordability standard, calculated against an area's average median income.

The bill responds to a statewide housing shortage marked by overcrowded, aging, and energy-inefficient housing stock. Alaska's ongoing loss of working-age residents drags on economic recovery, and AIDEA's existing financing infrastructure makes it a natural vehicle to address the shortfall, giving developers access to capital that can make new housing projects viable.

[House Bill 184](#), sponsored by Representative Andi Story, was the House version of Senate Bill 10, which passed the legislature.

SENATE BILL 18 VIA HOUSE BILL 57 – CELL PHONE POLICY IN SCHOOLS *by SENATORS BILL WIELECHOWSKI, Gray-Jackson*

[Senate Bill 18](#) requires each Alaska school district to adopt policies that restrict student cell phone use during school hours. The bill is motivated by research linking mobile device use among school-age children to depression, anxiety, and reduced classroom focus. It would also direct the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development to develop a model policy for districts to reference. Rather than imposing a statewide mandate, the bill gives individual communities the flexibility to craft policies tailored to their students and teachers. As of October 7, 2024, twenty-nine states had introduced similar legislation, and eight had already passed laws restricting phone use in schools.

[House Bill 57](#), by Representative Zack Fields, was the House version of Senate Bill 18, which passed the legislature.

SENATE BILL 20 VIA HOUSE BILL 27– CPR CURRICULUM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS *by SENATORS ELVI GRAY-JACKSON, Claman, Tobin, Kawasaki*

Sudden Cardiac Arrest continues to be one of the top causes of death in the United States. Bystander CPR can triple a person’s chances of survival. [Senate Bill 20](#) is designed to improve health education in public schools by introducing CPR training for students all across the state. This initiative aims to give young people the practical skills and confidence they need to act quickly and effectively in emergencies. By doing so, Alaska will see more CPR-trained individuals ready to help in communities everywhere.

By integrating CPR instruction into the school curriculum, the legislation promotes a culture of preparedness while ensuring equitable access to this life-saving training, regardless of a student’s socioeconomic background or geographic location. In addition to improving public health outcomes, the program would give students early exposure to workforce skills, helping address labor shortages in health-related and emergency response fields.

Senate Bill 20 was amended into [House Bill 27](#), sponsored by Representative Genevieve Mina, which expands Alaska's statewide trauma care system to include strokes and severe heart attacks, adding standardized protocols for first responders, transport guidelines, and hospital certification standards.

SENATE BILL 21 – ALASKA WORK AND SAVE PROGRAM *by SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI, Gray-Jackson*

[Senate Bill 21](#) creates an automatic IRA enrollment program for Alaskan workers who don't already have an employer-sponsored retirement plan. Contributions would be deducted directly from paychecks each pay period, though employees can opt out at any time. The bill also includes a "Pick. Click. Save." feature allowing Alaskans to direct their Permanent Fund Dividend into retirement savings with a single click on the annual application.

The bill addresses a growing concern around Alaska's aging population, where the number of residents aged 60 and over is expected to double between 2010 and 2030. With the average Social Security payment at \$1,827/month, but the average cost of living in Alaska at over \$4,500/month, many seniors face a significant financial gap. The percentage of Alaska seniors living in poverty has nearly doubled since 2010, and the number receiving SNAP benefits has doubled since 2011.

Senate Bill 21 is modeled after similar programs already running in 16 other states, which have collectively saved \$630 million across 610,000 accounts. For businesses, the program lowers administrative costs and helps with employee recruitment and retention. Overall, the bill aims to strengthen financial security for older Alaskans while easing the long-term burden on state social assistance programs.

SENATE BILL 23 – CIVICS EDUCATION *by SENATORS GARY STEVENS, Gray-Jackson, Tobin, Claman, Stedman, Giessel, Kawasaki, Wielechowski*

[Senate Bill 23](#) strengthens civics education in Alaska schools by emphasizing the importance of preparing students for active citizenship in a democratic society. Over the past several decades, civics education has received less attention in schools as academic priorities shifted toward preparing students for college and careers, with a greater focus on subjects such as math, reading, and writing. Experts suggest that this decline in emphasis on civic learning may contribute to lower levels of civic engagement, including reduced voter participation among young people.

SENATE BILL 24 – INCREASING THE MINIMAL AGE FOR TOBACCO AND E-CIGARETTES *by SENATORS GARY STEVENS, Giessel, Gray-Jackson*

[Senate Bill 24](#) changes Alaska law governing tobacco and electronic smoking products (ESPs). First, it raises the minimum age to buy, sell, or possess these products from 19 to 21, aligning state statute with federal law enacted in December 2019. Second, it establishes a new sales tax on ESPs. The age change would strengthen Alaska's existing underage sales enforcement program, which currently operates under a state threshold that is out of step with federal requirements.

The bill responds to documented and growing ESP use among Alaska youth. Alaska Department of Health data shows that 26% of high school students were active ESP users as of 2019, with 46% reporting having tried them. These figures are projected to have risen since. ESPs remain under-regulated, have not been found by the FDA to effectively help smokers quit, and carry unknown long-term health risks. Taxes on tobacco products have an established record of reducing youth uptake and supporting cessation among adults who want to quit, making the proposed sales tax a complementary tool to the age restriction.

SENATE BILL 35 - CONTRACTOR STATUS FOR DELIVERY AND RIDESHARE DRIVERS *by SENATOR JESSE BJORKMAN*

[Senate Bill 35](#) establishes a clear and consistent legal framework for workers in delivery and transportation network companies in Alaska by classifying individuals who provide prearranged rides or delivery services through digital platforms as independent contractors, provided they meet certain statutory criteria. The bill aligns delivery drivers with rideshare drivers, who are already recognized as independent contractors, to eliminate current gaps in statute that have led to confusion and legal disputes nationwide. By addressing inconsistencies, particularly around workers' compensation, SB 35 protects the flexibility these workers rely on while preserving services valued by consumers and expanding opportunities for individuals who use this work to supplement their income.

SENATE BILL 40 – HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH *by SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON*

[Senate Bill 40](#) codifies September 15th through October 15th as Hispanic Heritage Month in Alaska, aligning with the national observance that marks the 1821 independence of several Latin American nations. The bill recognizes the significant contributions Hispanic and Latino Alaskans have made to the state's history, culture, and economy, with the goal of fostering greater appreciation for Hispanic and Latino cultures, promoting diversity, and strengthening community ties across Alaska.

SENATE BILL 41 – MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS *by SENATORS ELVI GRAY-JACKSON, CLAMAN, GIESSEL, DUNBAR, TOBIN, KAWASAKI, HOFFMAN*

[Senate Bill 41](#) establishes mental health education as a core component of Alaska's K–12 curriculum, placing it on equal footing with physical health education. The bill directs the Board of Education and Early Development to develop statewide guidelines for mental health instruction in collaboration with health agencies, tribal organizations, and mental health experts, ensuring a well-rounded and informed approach. It also emphasizes parental involvement by requiring schools to notify families at least two weeks before introducing mental health instruction, promoting transparency and engagement.

The legislation further ensures accountability and thoughtful implementation by requiring the Board to report back to the Legislature within two years on the development of these guidelines. A two-year transition period is included to allow adequate time for consultation, planning, and integration into existing curricula. Overall, SB 41 equips students with essential knowledge and tools to better understand and manage their mental health, supporting healthier and more resilient future generations.

SENATE BILL 44 VIA HOUSE BILL 52 – RIGHTS OF MINORS IN PSYCHIATRIC FACILITIES *BY SENATOR MATT CLAMAN, GIESSEL, TOBIN, DUNBAR*

[Senate Bill 44](#) increases transparency and strengthens protections for Alaskan children placed in psychiatric hospitals. A 2022 DOJ investigation found that over 800 children were institutionalized in such facilities. In 2020, more than a third of whom were Alaska Native, are often placed hundreds of miles from their families. Concerns have been raised about the excessive use of seclusion, physical restraints, and forced sedation at these facilities, which are practices the medical community considers a last resort. Long-term institutionalization is particularly devastating for Alaska Native families, echoing the historical trauma of forced boarding school separations.

This introduces three key reforms: guaranteeing children the right to maintain communication with their parents or guardians while institutionalized, requiring unannounced state health inspections twice per year, and mandating transparency around the use of seclusion and restraint. The bill also requires the Alaska Department of Health to publish a report to the Legislature with data from these facilities, ensuring ongoing public accountability and helping to ensure that the facilities caring for Alaska's youth are safe.

[House Bill 52](#), sponsored by Representative Maxine Diebert, was the House version of Senate Bill 44, which passed the legislature.

SENATE BILL 79 – PAYROLL CARD ACCOUNT BY THE SENATE LABOR & COMMERCE COMMITTEE

[Senate Bill 79](#) authorizes employers to pay wages via a payroll card account, either with an employee's voluntary consent or when an employee has not designated a deposit account. The bill requires employers to disclose all potential card fees and guarantee a cost-free method for employees to access their wages. Employers may not offer cards that charge fees for application, initiation, or account participation. The bill also prohibits insurers, payment card networks, banks, and processors from charging merchants interchange fees on the tax or gratuity portion of electronic payment transactions for up to 180 days after a transaction.

The legislation benefits employees without traditional bank accounts by providing an alternative to paper checks and a means to avoid check-cashing fees. Payroll cards must allow fee-free purchases at any store and one cost-free ATM withdrawal per pay period up to the employee's net wages.

SENATE BILL 86 – MODERNIZING ALASKA'S MONEY TRANSMISSION LAWS *by SENATOR JESSE KIEHL*

[Senate Bill 86](#) updates Alaska's outdated 2007 money transmission laws to cover cryptocurrency and better protect Alaskans from financial harm. With crypto transactions growing rapidly and exchange collapses already costing Alaskans tens of millions of dollars, the current laws leave residents unable to tell whether the businesses handling their assets are subject to any state oversight at all.

The bill adopts a model law developed jointly by the Conference of State Bank Supervisors and industry groups, already in place in 27 other states. It applies to both cash and crypto and accomplishes three key things: licensing money services businesses to screen out bad actors, requiring businesses to maintain sufficient funds or crypto to cover what customers entrust to them, and preventing the misuse or diversion of customer assets. Businesses like banks and brokerages that are already regulated under existing safety rules would not face redundant oversight.

Because financial regulation is left to the states by the federal government, SB 86 also allows Alaska regulators to collaborate with counterparts in other states through modern tools like the Nationwide Multistate Licensing System and Registry, increasing efficiency and reducing costs. Finally, the bill replaces the current flat licensing fee structure with a volume-based model, so small local businesses aren't paying the same fees as multinational corporations, lowering barriers to entry while ensuring larger operators contribute appropriately.

SENATE BILL 89 – PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT SCOPE OF PRACTICE *by SENATORS LÖKI TOBIN, Gray-Jackson, Giessel*

[Senate Bill 89](#) improves access to medical care in Alaska by allowing physician assistants working in licensed medical facilities to practice to the full extent of their professional licensure. The legislation responds to ongoing challenges across the state, including long wait times and difficulty accessing timely diagnosis and treatment. By utilizing existing facility licensing procedures, the bill expands the capacity of Alaska's healthcare system while reducing regulatory barriers that limit how physician assistants can provide care.

The bill maintains the current collaborative agreement requirement for physician assistants practicing outside licensed medical facilities while reducing administrative burdens for those working within them. Oversight by the State Medical Board would remain in place to ensure professional standards and accountability. Because many physician assistants practice in rural Alaska, the bill will help increase

access to care in underserved areas, reduce healthcare costs, and allow patients to receive treatment in their home communities rather than traveling to regional hubs, easing strain on those healthcare systems.

SENATE BILL 104 – VEHICLE AND BOAT TITLE TRANSFER UPON DEATH *by SENATORS KAWASAKI, Wielechowski, Stedman*

[Senate Bill 104](#) reduces the financial and emotional burden families face after the death of a loved one by allowing certain assets to transfer directly to designated beneficiaries without going through probate. Probate can be a lengthy and costly legal process that may take months or even years and can require families to spend thousands of dollars in legal and filing fees during an already difficult time. The bill builds on previous efforts by the Alaska Legislature to simplify estate transfers and provide practical options for residents dealing with the administrative challenges that follow a death in the family.

Specifically, SB 104 expands the concept of Transfer on Death deeds, created under earlier legislation for real property, to include vehicles, boats, and certain titled manufactured homes issued through the Division of Motor Vehicles. The bill would allow owners to designate a beneficiary on a simple DMV form so that ownership automatically transfers upon the owner's death, bypassing probate. This could be especially important in situations where a vehicle or boat is essential to a family's livelihood, such as a fishing business that depends on immediate access to its vessel. The program would be supported through filing fees, requiring no additional state funding while helping Alaskans transfer these assets more quickly and efficiently.

SENATE BILL 118 VIA HOUSE BILL 10 – FACULTY MEMBER ON THE UA BOARD OF REGENTS *by the SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE*

[Senate Bill 118](#) adds one tenured faculty member to the University of Alaska Board of Regents, serving a two-year term following a formal selection process. Currently an eleven-member body, the board sets policy and guides the university's mission, but has no faculty representation among its voting members.

[House Bill 10](#), sponsored by Representative Ashley Carrickan, was the House version of Senate Bill 118, which passed the legislature.

SENATE BILL 130 – EXPANDING TAX INCENTIVES TO STRENGTHEN ALASKA'S SEAFOOD INDUSTRY *by the JOINT LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE EVALUATING ALASKA'S SEAFOOD INDUSTRY*

[Senate Bill 130](#) expands the Fisheries Product Development Tax Credit to support the state's seafood industry. The law increases the current credit, which previously let processors deduct the cost of value-added production equipment from their Fishery Business Tax liability for five species, to now include all fish and shellfish. It also introduces new qualifying investment categories, requires the Department of Revenue to make eligibility determinations more quickly, and extends the credit's sunset date by three years.

The legislation, sponsored by the Joint Legislative Task Force Evaluating Alaska's Seafood Industry, directly implements Recommendations 7(a) and 7(b) from the task force's findings and recommendations. Amid historically poor market conditions and declining product values, the law aims

to encourage processors to invest in new technologies and equipment, enhancing the competitiveness of Alaska seafood and benefiting both processors and fishermen.

SENATE BILL 132 – OMNIBUS INSURANCE BILL *by the SENATE LABOR & COMMERCE COMMITTEE*

[Senate Bill 132](#) is an omnibus insurance policy that makes mostly minor technical updates to Alaska's Title 21 insurance statutes. The bill enhances consumer protections, simplifies premium tax calculations, expands the types of health care plans employers can offer, improves insurer financial reporting requirements, corrects errors from prior insurance legislation, and tightens Alaska licensing requirements — all without negatively impacting consumers, insurers, or insurance producers. The premium tax adjustment is expected to generate an additional \$110,000 for the state's general fund, and the bill requires no additional staffing for the Division of Insurance.

SENATE BILL 146 – REAA FUND: MT. EDGE CUMBE, TEACHER HOUSING *by the SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE*

[Senate Bill 146](#) expands the eligibility of the Regional Educational Attendance Area Fund to support major maintenance projects for Mt. Edgecumbe High School and rural teacher housing. The bill addresses long-standing funding inequities identified in the 2001 *Kasayulie v. State of Alaska* court ruling, which found the state's school construction funding process unconstitutional and discriminatory against rural schools. Mt. Edgecumbe, a state-run boarding school in Sitka serving over 400 students from across Alaska, has not had the same access to the REAA major maintenance list as other school districts, relying solely on executive branch requests. SB 146 puts Mt. Edgecumbe on equal footing by allowing it to apply for maintenance grants like any other district.

The bill also addresses the urgent need for safe and reliable teacher housing in rural Alaska. While the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation assists with the construction of teacher housing, no program currently supports long-term maintenance. SB 146 allows rural school districts to apply for REAA funds to maintain these housing units, which are critical for recruiting and retaining educators in small, remote communities. Lawmakers emphasized that these changes strengthen Alaska's rural education system by ensuring that all districts have fair access to resources that support students and educators across the state.

SENATE BILL 164 – ELIMINATION OF OUTDATED TAX INCENTIVES *by SENATOR KELLY MERRICK*

[Senate Bill 164](#) trims outdated tax incentives from the state statute. The bill eliminates three existing benefits for businesses remitting certain taxes: the timely filing credit for motor fuel and tire fee taxes, the deduction for filing tobacco product taxes, and the Stamp Tax Discount on cigarette stamps. These changes stem from recommendations made through the state's Indirect Expenditure Report, a joint audit process conducted by the Department of Revenue and the Division of Legislative Finance that evaluates whether existing state programs still serve their intended purpose.

While modest in scope, the bill reflects a broader legislative push toward government efficiency and fiscal responsibility during a period of financial uncertainty for the state. By closing these small but unnecessary tax breaks, Alaska stands to capture additional revenue that had previously been flowing to businesses as administrative incentives, perks the audit process flagged as no longer justified.

SENATE BILL 167 - RESTORING PFDS FOR WRONGFULLY CONVICTED ALASKANS by *SENATOR SCOTT KAWASAKI, Gray-Jackson*

[Senate Bill 167](#) allows Alaskans whose criminal convictions were later vacated, reversed, or dismissed to receive the Permanent Fund Dividend payments they lost while incarcerated, recognizing that wrongfully convicted individuals should be compensated for benefits denied to them. The bill requires eligible individuals to apply within one year of their judgment or the bill's effective date and excludes cases resolved through certain plea agreements. It is framed as a matter of fairness and justice, noting Alaska currently offers no compensation for wrongful convictions, and argues that restoring lost PFDS can help exonerees rebuild their lives by supporting basic needs like housing, education, and job training.

SENATE BILL 174 – INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT by *SENATORS FORREST DUNBAR, Wielechowski, Bjorkman, Tobin, Kawasaki, Merrick, Claman, Gray-Jackson, Stedman, Stevens*

[Senate Bill 174](#) establishes an Alaska Invasive Species Council within the Department of Fish and Game to improve the prevention, eradication, and control of invasive species across the state. The bill also creates an invasive species response fund to provide dedicated resources for management efforts. The legislation comes as invasive species are already causing measurable harm to Alaska's ecosystems. Northern pike have devastated salmon runs in Southcentral Alaska, elodea is degrading salmon habitat statewide, orange hawkweed is spreading across Anchorage roadways, and European green crab is threatening an already struggling Red King Crab population in Southeast Alaska.

The council will coordinate efforts among the many state departments, federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations currently working on invasive species management in Alaska, bringing clearer strategies and unified policies while saving the state money through the involvement of volunteer experts. The urgency is underscored by the scale of the problem nationally, as the annual economic impact of invasive species in the United States exceeded \$26 billion in 2021. With warming oceans bringing new species northward and increased globalization raising the risk of new introductions, Alaska's relative isolation offers a narrowing window of opportunity to act before invasives become far more costly and difficult to control.

SENATE BILL 178 - INFANT EARLY LEARNING EXPANSION by *the SENATE HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE*

[Senate Bill 178](#) expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program (ILP) by lowering the eligibility threshold from a 50 percent developmental delay to 25 percent, aligning it with the standard used for special education services. Alaska's current criteria are among the most restrictive in the nation, prompting many healthcare providers to hesitate to refer children who may not qualify. Expanding eligibility would enable more families to access early healthcare and therapy services, which research shows lead to better life outcomes and reduce the need for more intensive and costly interventions down the road.

Beyond expanding eligibility, the bill would also allow Alaska's ILP system to access more federal Medicaid funding, reducing the burden on state general funds. Additionally, it directs the Department of Health to review which conditions qualify as disabilities, make recommendations to the legislature to

update that list, and submit a comprehensive report by July 1, 2029. The bill was developed based on recommendations from the Alaska Department of Health's Interagency Coordinating Council, with input from stakeholders statewide who work with children with disabilities and their families.

SENATE BILL 181 – IMPROVING ALASKA’S INTER-AGENCY DATA SHARING *by the JOINT LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE EVALUATING ALASKA’S SEAFOOD INDUSTRY*

[Senate Bill 181](#) modernizes Alaska’s data infrastructure by improving inter-agency data sharing to better support workforce development, fisheries, education, and policymaking. The bill addresses limitations in current statutes that create data silos, slowing permitting, obscuring workforce trends, and hindering informed decisions. By allowing responsible sharing of disaggregated data between agencies such as the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the University of Alaska through contract agreements, SB 181 promotes a more connected, transparent, and efficient system. Ultimately, the legislation aligns state resources with industry needs, strengthens workforce outcomes, and enhances governance through improved access to critical scientific, economic, and educational data.

SENATE BILL 187 – FOOD DYE PROHIBITION IN SCHOOL LUNCHES *by SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI*

[Senate Bill 187](#) improves the health and academic performance of Alaskan students by banning seven synthetic food dyes from school lunches, including Red dyes 3 and 40, Yellow dyes 5 and 6, Blue dyes 1 and 2, and Green dye 3. These color additives offer no nutritional value and have been linked to a range of harmful effects in children, such as hyperactivity, inattentiveness, sleep disorders, aggression, and even cancer. With natural alternatives readily available and nine other states already having passed similar legislation, SB 187 aims to ensure Alaska students are served meals that support their well-being and set them up for long-term success.

SENATE BILL 191 VIA HOUSE BILL 216 – TRANSFER OF RAILROAD LAND TO WHITTIER *by SENATOR CATHY GIESSEL*

[Senate Bill 191](#) authorizes a land exchange between the Alaska Railroad Corporation and the City of Whittier. ARRC currently owns roughly 85% of developable land in Whittier's downtown, waterfront, and aviation areas, which has constrained permanent development. The bill provides the legislative approval required under state law for ARRC to convey approximately 85 acres it has identified as non-essential to rail operations, with Whittier transferring land in return that supports future railroad needs.

The exchange would open those parcels to harbor expansion, seasonal workforce housing, and general aviation development, positioning Whittier as a multimodal hub in Southcentral Alaska. Both the city and ARRC support the transfer, and proponents argue it aligns with state and federal infrastructure priorities around port modernization and coastal community resilience.

[House Bill 216](#), sponsored by Representative Ky Holland, was the House version of Senate Bill 191, which passed the legislature.

SENATE BILL 192 - EVACUATION DESIGNATION LEVELS *by SENATOR JESSE BJORKMAN*

[Senate Bill 192](#) amends the Alaska Disaster Act to standardize wildfire evacuation language and color-coded maps across Alaska, with the goal of reducing public confusion during emergencies — especially when multiple wildfires are occurring simultaneously. The bill formalizes a system already being used by the Alaska Emergency Managers Association (AKEMA) and is supported by multiple state agencies, including the Division of Forestry and the State Fire Marshal's Office.

The three designation levels are:

- Level 1 – Ready (green): An emergency may exist in the area.
- Level 2 – Set (yellow): Evacuation of the area is imminent.
- Level 3 – Go (red): A dangerous hazard exists, and individuals should immediately evacuate.

SENATE BILL 200 – FARM AND AGRICULTURAL LAND ASSESSMENTS *by SENATOR JESSE BJORKMAN*

[Senate Bill 200](#) updates Alaska state law to strengthen its agricultural sector and support long-term food security. It clarifies that farms organized as S Corporations are eligible for the existing municipal property tax deferral and expands that benefit to non-food agricultural operations, such as peony farms and hay producers.

These non-food operations are important because they maintain the supply chains, services, and economies of scale that food-producing farms depend on. Alaska currently relies heavily on imported food, making the expansion and stabilization of in-state agriculture a key priority for addressing food insecurity.

The bill also corrects an unintended gap that excluded S Corporations, which don't file an IRS Schedule F, from a recently modernized eligibility system. SB 200 allows them to submit equivalent financial information instead, and further broadens the definition of "farm use" to include land under an approved soil conservation plan, such as timbered windbreak land, making it eligible for the tax deferral.

SENATE BILL 208 – AGRICULTURAL LAND LEASES *by SENATOR JESSE BJORKMAN*

[Senate Bill 208](#) makes it easier for Alaskans to lease state land for farming by reducing upfront costs like surveys and appraisals, which the Department of Natural Resources would only require when truly necessary. Lease applications would be evaluated on a farmer's viability and the quality of their plan rather than simply who can pay the most, and when agricultural land is sold, priority would go to those who will actually work it. The bill also gives the State better tools to keep leased land in active production by encouraging compliance before resorting to reclaiming land.

Affordable land is one of the biggest barriers to farming in Alaska. By cutting red tape and creating a fairer, farmer-focused leasing process, SB 208 brings more Alaskans into agriculture, strengthening the state's food security and supporting rural communities.

SENATE BILL 214 – CAPITAL BUDGET

[Senate Bill 214](#), otherwise known as the Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Budget, allocates \$248 million in Unrestricted General Funds (UGF) while leveraging nearly \$1.8 billion in federal matching dollars for infrastructure projects statewide. The centerpiece of the budget is a major investment in K-12 public schools: of the \$88.7 million in UGF added by the Senate Finance Committee, \$83.5 million, about 94%,

is directed toward K-12 education to ensure students have safe learning environments. Key school-related allocations include \$57 million for major maintenance at the top 15 priority schools on the state's deferred maintenance list, \$17 million to replace the Stebbins school destroyed in a 2024 fire, and \$14 million for repairs at Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

The budget addresses what lawmakers describe as a long-neglected crisis in school infrastructure, particularly in rural Alaska. Years of documented neglect have left failing infrastructure threatening student health, safety, and learning, conditions brought sharply into focus when a Senate Finance delegation made an impromptu visit to Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka and found leaking roofs, rodent infestations, and crumbling dormitories. Beyond schools, the budget also includes \$42.5 million for the University of Alaska deferred maintenance and funding for workforce development programs aimed at building Alaska's pipeline and construction workforce. The budget now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.

SENATE BILL 237 - ONLINE SOCIAL SECURITY CARD REPLACEMENT *BY THE SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE BY REQUEST*

[Senate Bill 237](#) updates Alaska law to allow residents to apply online to replace a lost Social Security card. Alaska is currently the only state that does not offer a fully online process, requiring citizens to either visit one of three SSA offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks, or Juneau, or mail their sensitive original documents, which is a process that can take up to 45 days and leaves individuals unable to verify their identity in the meantime.

The burden falls hardest on rural Alaskans, who may have to travel hundreds of miles at their own expense or risk losing irreplaceable documents like passports and birth certificates in an unreliable mail system. Moving this process online removes those barriers for rural residents while also saving time for urban Alaskans, making the system more accessible and efficient for everyone statewide.

SENATE BILL 258 – FAIR SOFTWARE LICENSING *by SENATOR JESSE KIEHL*

[Senate Bill 258](#) addresses a growing problem in government software contracts where vendors include terms that force government agencies to use specific cloud services or prohibit the use of competitors' cloud platforms. This kind of vendor lock-in limits flexibility, drives up costs, and strips local governments of the ability to make their own technology and budget decisions. The bill would ban such restrictions from software licensing contracts, ensuring that the state and its political subdivisions remain free to choose whether to use cloud services at all, and if so, which provider best fits their operational and financial needs.

SENATE BILL 272 – ALASKA HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE *by the SENATE HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE*

[Senate Bill 272](#) updates Alaska's Health Information Exchange (HIE) law, which was originally established in response to the federal HITECH Act of 2009. That federal legislation pushed states to adopt electronic health records (EHRs) and create statewide HIEs to enable the secure sharing of clinical data. The Alaska legislature responded in 2009 with SB 133, but given how significantly both EHRs and HIEs have evolved over the past decade and a half, the state's existing law needed modernizing.

The bill introduces several key changes: it clarifies the division of responsibilities between the Alaska Department of Health and the HIE administrator, strengthens individual patients' ability to authorize disclosure of their own health information, refines the scope of allowable data uses for limited health care operations, formally codifies public health as a primary allowable use, and adds a behavioral health provider representative to the HIE governing body. Importantly, SB 272 does not alter the core allowable uses of the HIE — it simply updates the language to better reflect current needs while continuing to protect patient privacy.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 17 - CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ALASKA'S REGIONAL EDUCATION ATTENDANCE AREAS *by the SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE*

[Senate Concurrent Resolution 17](#) celebrates the 50th anniversary of Alaska's Regional Education Attendance Areas (REAs), which were established in 1975 to provide public education across the state's unorganized borough with a focus on local community governance. The resolution honors the legacy of the landmark "Molly Hootch" case (*Tobeluk v. Lind*), which led to a 1976 consent decree guaranteeing rural communities access to local secondary schools, and reaffirms the Legislature's ongoing commitment to equitable, community-directed public education for all Alaskan students regardless of where they live.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 20 – MARINE DEBRIS CLEANUP *by SENATOR JESSE BJORKMAN*

[Senate Joint Resolution 20](#) addresses the growing problem of foreign marine debris along Alaska's coastlines. Alaska's vast 44,000-mile shoreline, nearly equal to the rest of the U.S. combined, is being polluted by foreign trash that harms wildlife and threatens the ocean-dependent culture and livelihoods of Alaskans, yet only about 6% has been cleaned since efforts began in 2006. Despite NOAA removing over two million pounds of debris through federally funded projects, remote locations, harsh conditions, and disposal challenges make cleanup extremely difficult. The resolution calls on Alaska's Congressional Delegation to push for greater federal funding for marine debris cleanup, transport, prevention, and education.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 29 – CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISH A PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND *BY THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE*

[Senate Joint Resolution 29](#) proposes an amendment to Article IX of the Alaska Constitution that would establish a dedicated education fund in the state treasury. Money deposited into this fund could only be appropriated for public education, ensuring those dollars are protected from being redirected elsewhere.

This dedicated education fund will be a powerful tool for stabilizing school funding at a time when districts across Alaska are facing serious budget shortfalls, aging infrastructure, and decades of deferred maintenance. The measure will be placed before Alaska voters on the November 3 ballot, where a simple majority will be needed to ratify the amendment and secure a more stable future for public education in the state.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 30 – SUPPORTING MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE PARTNERSHIPS IN ALASKA *by the SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE*

[Senate Joint Resolution 30](#) expresses support for the United States military and highlights Alaska’s critical role in national defense due to its strategic geography and high concentration of service members and veterans. The resolution emphasizes that current infrastructure is insufficient to meet growing military needs, which strains both readiness and local communities. It promotes increased collaboration between the military and private sector through mechanisms like Enhanced Use Lease agreements and joint-use facilities that serve both civilian and military purposes. By signaling state support for these partnerships, the resolution aims to strengthen community resilience, improve infrastructure, and enhance overall military readiness in Alaska.

HOUSE BILL 28 – COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION PACKAGE *by REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY*

[House Bill 28](#) is an education “mini-bus” policy that was built on the work of prior legislative sessions and the Joint Education Task Force, a package of education measures addressing school funding, teacher recruitment and retention, and school board governance. The bill directs state resources toward persistent challenges in Alaska’s public school system, including high energy costs, teacher shortages, and inconsistent policies for students in different learning programs. Details about the “mini-bus” education package are:

Energy Relief for School Districts: The bill authorizes the state to reimburse each school district for energy costs, calculated as a three-year average of expenditures on heating fuel and electricity for district facilities. Reimbursement is set at 100 percent and is subject to appropriation. The program would take effect in FY 2028. The Department of Education and Early Development is required to include reimbursement data in its annual report to the Legislature, covering each district’s actual expenditures and amounts distributed. The energy reimbursement program is also subject to DEED audits.

Correspondence Study Programs: The bill adds language requiring school districts to apply the same materials policies to all students, regardless of whether they are enrolled in correspondence or brick-and-mortar programs. Correspondence students would be permitted to retain textbooks and other materials, including those purchased through an annual student allotment.

Local Contribution: The bill amends state law to align the time period for school consolidation efforts with the existing four-year hold harmless provision. It also caps the annual percentage increase in a district’s required local contribution at five percent over the prior year.

Educational Resource Centers: The bill amends state law to allow Regional Resource Centers to hire retired teachers and certified staff without affecting those employees’ retirement benefits.

Teacher Student Loan Repayment Program: The bill establishes a three-year pilot program providing student loan repayment grants to public school teachers in special education, English as a second language, science, technology, engineering, or mathematics. Annual grants are capped at \$5,000 per recipient, and no individual may receive more than three years of grants. The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education is required to report to the Legislature on the program’s effectiveness. The program is set to be repealed on June 1, 2030.

School Board Qualifications and Substitute Teaching: The Senate added language prohibiting anyone convicted of a felony under state or federal law from serving on a regional or municipal school board. The bill also allows school board members to substitute teach in the schools they oversee.

The Senate Education Committee and Joint Legislative Task Force on Education Chair, Senator Löki Tobin, joined Representative Story to develop and advance this legislation through the process.

HOUSE BILL 78 (SENATE BILL 28)– PUBLIC EMPLOYEE DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT SYSTEM *by the HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE – VETOED BY GOVERNOR DUNELAVY*

Alaska has faced a persistent workforce crisis, with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development reporting that approximately 47,000 more residents left the state than arrived between 2013 and 2024. High living costs, insufficient benefits, and limited opportunities have driven this outmigration, leaving critical public sector positions in education, public safety, and essential services chronically understaffed. Behind every unfilled position in Alaska is a classroom without a teacher, a community without a trooper, and a family without the services they were promised. Behind every position we do have filled is a public servant we cannot afford to lose. These staffing shortages and quick turnovers have a \$640 million price tag, and for far too long, Alaskans have been the ones paying it. [House Bill 78](#) directly addresses this challenge by establishing a competitive defined benefit retirement plan designed to recruit qualified professionals and retain experienced employees across Alaska.

[House Bill 78](#) creates a new shared-risk pension plan for teachers, public safety workers, and other public employees, with built-in safeguards to protect against the unfunded liability issues associated with Alaska's pre-2006 pension system. Employees vest after five years and contribute 8% of their pay, with employer contributions capped to protect local municipalities. The plan includes inflation protection through Post-Retirement Pension Adjustments, healthcare reimbursement accounts, and disability and death benefits — offering a level of financial security the current defined contribution system cannot match. Both current and new employees have the choice to opt into the new plan or remain in the existing system.

By investing in a stable, competitive retirement plan, HB 78 delivers long-term savings for the state through reduced turnover, lower recruitment and training costs, and preservation of institutional knowledge. A reliable pension fosters workforce loyalty and reduces the costly cycle of vacancy, overtime, and burnout that undermines public service quality. HB 78 is a strategic commitment to Alaska's workforce and future — signaling that the state values the dedicated professionals who keep Alaska's communities safe, educated, and thriving.

The Senate's version of the bill, [Senate Bill 28](#), was sponsored by Senator Cathy Giessel and co-sponsored by Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Claman, Tobin, Kawasaki, Bjorkman, Dunbar, Stevens, and Wielechowski.

HOUSE BILL 117 – COMMERCIAL SET GILLNET FISHING / ELECTRONIC TRAWL MONITORING *by the HOUSE FISHERIES COMMITTEE*

[House Bill 117](#) codifies the traditional cooperative model for salmon set-gillnet operations, wherein small groups, often comprised of family units in rural Alaska, collaborate, consolidate their catch, and have a single permit holder act on behalf of the group. The Senate Resources Committee's work draft broadens the bill's scope in two additional respects: it designates the east side of Cook Inlet as a separate administrative zone for set-net entry permits, distinct from the broader Cook Inlet administrative region, with permit reassignments set to commence on January 1, 2027; and it authorizes

the Department of Fish and Game commissioner to mandate the participation of vessel registrations under state law in electronic monitoring programs for state commercial finfish trawl fisheries.

The electronic monitoring provision includes several conditions before implementation: vessels in the affected fishery must already carry electronic monitoring systems due to participation in a federally managed fishery in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, or Gulf of Alaska, and the program may not require vessel owners to purchase or install additional equipment beyond federal requirements. The commissioner must also determine in writing that monitoring is a practical data-gathering or enforcement tool, will not unduly disrupt the fishery, can be conducted at reasonable cost, and can be coordinated with federal and other state agency programs. Costs of implementing or operating the program may not be assessed against participating commercial fishers.

HOUSE BILL 263 – OPERATING BUDGET

[House Bill 263](#), the FY27 operating budget, is balanced on an average oil price of \$75 per barrel, \$2 below the Department of Revenue's spring forecast. The legislature set aside \$47 million in reserves to cover anticipated supplemental appropriations in the following year. The budget is designed to fund core state services across all agencies while maintaining the state's overall fiscal stability.

A significant focus of the budget is education and community relief. More than \$144 million is directed to Alaska's school districts, including a one-time \$115 million investment outside the Base Student Allocation and \$29.1 million in energy relief grants for schools. Communities also receive a full \$30 million in assistance for FY27, with an additional \$90 million deposited into the community assistance fund to sustain that level through FY28. Individual Alaskans will receive a \$200 energy relief payment added to their Permanent Fund Dividend, and communities get a separate \$20 million base payment to offset high fuel and shipping costs.

The budget also invests in long-term cost management and fiscal accountability. It funds a \$650,000 independent study on the drivers of growth in the Department of Corrections, which is one of the fastest-growing areas of state government, and a \$400,000 study to assess whether Base Student Allocation funding adequately covers the constitutional cost of education in Alaska. Other notable expenditures include \$60.6 million for wildfire suppression, \$48 million for disaster relief, increased pension contributions meeting actuarially recommended levels, and a \$272.2 million multi-year federal appropriation for rural health transformation.