

34TH ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
ALASKA SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS



FIRST SESSION
JANUARY THROUGH MAY 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE PRESIDENT | 2 |
| HOUSE BILL 57 - EDUCATION FUNDING AND POLICY CHANGES AIMED TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES | 3 |
| HOUSE BILL 53 – OPERATING BUDGET..... | 3 |
| SENATE BILL 57 – CAPITAL BUDGET | 3 |
| SENATE BILL 15 - MODERNIZING ALASKA’S ALCOHOL LAWS TO SUPPORT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, BUSINESS FLEXIBILITY, AND PUBLIC SAFETY | 4 |
| SENATE BILL 39 – CAP PAYDAY LOAN INTEREST RATES AND PROTECT ALASKAN BORROWERS..... | 5 |
| SENATE BILL 43 – ESTABLISHING MARCH AS WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH..... | 5 |
| SENATE BILL 47 – IMPROVING AND MAINTAINING ROADS THAT LEAD INTO CHUGACH STATE PARK..... | 5 |
| SENATE BILL 50 - ENCOURAGING LOCAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PLANS | 6 |
| SENATE BILL 54 – INTERIOR DESIGN REGISTRATION AND OVERSIGHT OF DESIGN PROFESSIONS | 6 |
| SENATE BILL 60 – ESTABLISHING MAY 12 AS MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS (ME) AWARENESS DAY | 6 |
| SENATE BILL 77 / HOUSE BILL 75 - DIVIDEND DIVISION CLEANUP | 7 |
| SENATE BILL 95 – EXPANDING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE | 7 |
| SENATE BILL 113 – DIGITAL CORPORATE TAX REFORM TO FUND STUDENT SUCCESS AND WORKFORCE PROGRAMS.. | 8 |
| SENATE BILL 115 / HOUSE BILL 116 – ALASKA-BASED INSURANCE COOPERATIVES FOR COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN . | 9 |
| SENATE BILL 132– OMNIBUS INSURANCE UPDATES..... | 9 |
| SENATE BILL 133 – PRIOR AUTHORIZATIONS | 9 |
| SENATE BILL 146 / HOUSE BILL 174 – REAA FUND: MT. EDGE CUMBE, TEACHER HOUSING..... | 10 |
| SENATE BILL 156 – TEMPORARY FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO STABILIZE COMMERCIAL FISHING LOAN ACCESS | 10 |
| SENATE BILL 183 – LEGISLATIVE ACCESS TO STATE AGENCY DATA FOR OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY | 11 |
| SENATE RESOLUTION 3 – URGING CONGRESS TO GRANT VOTING AND MILITARY OFFICER RIGHTS TO AMERICAN SAMOANS | 11 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 7 / HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 4 - MAINTAIN DENALI AS THE OFFICIAL NAME..... | 12 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 8 – REAFFIRMING ALASKA-TAIWAN PARTNERSHIP | 12 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 9 / HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 11 – RECOGNIZING ALASKA’S RELATIONSHIP WITH CANADA | 12 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 10 – HONORING Hmong VIETNAM VETERANS | 13 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 12 – URGING FEDERAL ACTION TO RESTORE AND MAINTAIN CRITICAL MARINE WEATHER BUOYS | 13 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 15 – OPPOSE FEDERAL CUTS TO MEDICAID | 14 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 16 – URGING CONGRESS TO PASS THE ENSURING LASTING SMILES ACT..... | 14 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 17 – RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENERGY COUNCIL..... | 15 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 18 / HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 15 - STATEWIDE WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION EFFORTS | 15 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 19 – URGING CONGRESS TO HONOR 90/10 REVENUE SPLIT FOR ANWR AND NPR-A DEVELOPMENT | 15 |
| SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 21 / HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 25 – RECRUITING AND RETAINING TEACHERS THROUGH J-1 AND H-1B VISAS | 16 |

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE PRESIDENT

As we close out the 2025 legislative session, I want to reflect on the work accomplished and the challenges that lie ahead. Serving the people of Alaska requires tough choices and a commitment to the long-term health of our state. This session, your legislature rose to meet those demands.

This year's budget process was shaped by the difficult fiscal reality of falling oil prices, which have reduced the revenue Alaska relies on to fund essential services. While oil remains a key part of our economy, the price drop this year left us without the necessary revenues we've leaned on to balance a status quo budget. The decisions were hard, forcing us to carefully examine where to reduce spending without jeopardizing the services Alaskans count on.



By working together across party lines, the Senate passed a budget that protects core services while acknowledging the deeper budget gap anticipated next year. We prioritized education, public safety, health care, and deferred maintenance, all while maintaining a modest financial buffer to help manage the projected \$300 to \$600 million deficit for Fiscal Year 2027. These decisions were not easy, but they were essential to keep our state on a stable path forward.

The work of the Alaska Senate and Legislature does not stop at the end of the legislative session. We know the challenges will only increase in the coming year. That's why we will continue to engage with Alaskans, gather input, and prepare for the 2026 session, focusing on securing a more stable fiscal future, strengthening public services, and protecting opportunities for the next generation.

I continue to be proud of the bipartisan cooperation that made our work possible. Alaska's unique political landscape requires us to look beyond party lines and collaborate on practical solutions. This session showed that when we do, we can deliver results. No single person has all the answers, but together, we can meet the challenge head-on for Alaska.

While the decisions ahead will be even more difficult, I have confidence in this legislature and in the people of Alaska. Thank you to every Alaskan who made their voice heard and participated in the process. We look forward to continuing this work together in the months ahead and returning next session ready to face the challenges before us.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gary Stevens', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Senator Gary Stevens
Republican - Kodiak, AK

HOUSE BILL 57 - EDUCATION FUNDING AND POLICY CHANGES AIMED TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

Through [House Bill 57](#), the Senate made another attempt to provide schools with the financial resources they need. The changes made in House Bill 57 reflect a bipartisan and bicameral balanced package that increases education funding while advancing several targeted policy reforms to strengthen Alaska's public education system. The bill provides a \$700 increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA), which is the state's primary method of funding K-12 schools, helping districts meet rising costs and support student learning. It also boosts pupil transportation funding by 10%, providing additional resources for both traditional and correspondence (homeschool) programs. Along with these funding increases, the bill includes a range of education policy changes—many reflecting priorities from the Governor and legislators across the political spectrum—that aim to improve student outcomes, expand opportunities, and strengthen accountability.

The legislation has six main components, in addition to the bill's original goal of regulating the use of cellphones in schools.

- Increases the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by \$700
- Increases pupil transportation by 10%
- Simplifies the process to renew charter schools
- Directs school boards to accept charter school applications year-round
- Authorizes the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development to gather data on students post-graduation from an Alaska high school.
- Establishes a Legislative Public Education Task Force

HOUSE BILL 53 – OPERATING BUDGET

The Alaska State Senate passed a balanced and transitional operating budget for Fiscal Year 2026, which secures essential services while positioning the state to better manage its fiscal challenges ahead. The budget avoids unsustainable draws from savings, limits spending, and creates a \$55 million budgetary buffer to help the state navigate a projected shortfall in Fiscal Year 2027. The difficult budget decisions were necessary choices to keep education, health care, and public safety adequately funded without overextending state finances. The budget also sets the Permanent Fund Dividend at \$1,000, totaling \$685 million, preserving Alaskans' access to the dividend while keeping the budget balanced.

The budget came in \$1.7 billion lower than the Governor's original proposal and avoids tapping the state's rainy day fund, the Constitutional Budget Reserve. By keeping spending in check and creating a financial cushion, the Senate preserved flexibility for next year when revenues are expected to decline further. While the budget reflects today's economic realities, it also invests in the public services Alaskans rely on every day.

SENATE BILL 57 – CAPITAL BUDGET

The Alaska State Senate passed a capital budget of \$2.9 billion, which emphasizes critical infrastructure maintenance, public safety enhancements, and essential statewide

investments. The budget includes \$162 million in unrestricted general funds (UGF), which is \$119 million less than the Governor's original proposal. This reduction was achieved through targeted cuts, reappropriation of unused funds, and increasing the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) dividend from 30% to 50% of net income, generating an additional \$12.5 million in revenue.

Key allocations in the budget include \$36 million for deferred maintenance projects, such as \$19 million for K-12 school major maintenance and \$5 million for University of Alaska facilities, and \$89 million for capital projects. These projects encompass the Fairbanks Public Safety Evidence Facility remodel, renewable energy initiatives in multiple communities, Alaska Marine Highway vessel maintenance, and courthouse security upgrades. The budget also reappropriates \$47.1 million in unused capital funds from prior projects and reallocates \$20.9 million in unutilized federal highway and airport match funds.

The capital budget continuously reflects the state's fiscal realities. It maximizes federal funding to the fullest extent possible and avoids overspending from state coffers while addressing major maintenance and other critical infrastructure needs.

SENATE BILL 15 - MODERNIZING ALASKA'S ALCOHOL LAWS TO SUPPORT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, BUSINESS FLEXIBILITY, AND PUBLIC SAFETY *by SENATOR MERRICK. Co-Sponsors: Bjorkman, Claman, Gray-Jackson*

[Senate Bill 15](#) is a comprehensive effort to modernize and clarify Alaska's alcohol laws to better meet the needs of businesses, workers, and communities across the state. It reflects the evolving nature of Alaska's hospitality, tourism, and entertainment sectors while maintaining strong safeguards to prevent underage drinking. One of the bill's key provisions allows individuals aged 18 to 20 to be employed to serve alcohol in restaurants, breweries, wineries, distilleries, hotels, motels, and large resorts—provided that the establishment offers appropriate supervision to ensure these employees do not consume alcohol themselves. This change creates new job opportunities for young Alaskans, helping businesses recruit and retain staff in a tight labor market, particularly in seasonal or tourism-driven economies where staffing challenges are common. SB 15 also clarifies that individuals aged 16 and older are permitted to enter restaurants and similar licensed establishments to dine, as long as safeguards are in place to ensure they are not improperly exposed to alcohol service or environments that prioritize alcohol consumption.

The legislation also addresses Alaska's entertainment industry by adjusting the service hours for alcohol in theaters, allowing these venues to meet customer demand while maintaining public safety standards. By clarifying the operational guidelines for businesses that hold alcohol licenses, especially those that operate seasonally or serve both minors and adults, SB 15 helps create a regulatory environment that supports economic growth while prioritizing the protection of young people.

SENATE BILL 39 – CAP PAYDAY LOAN INTEREST RATES AND PROTECT ALASKAN BORROWERS *by SENATOR DUNBAR. Co-Sponsors: Tobin, Gray-Jackson, Kawasaki*

[Senate Bill 39](#) addresses the harmful impact of payday lending by eliminating the statutory exemption that allows payday lenders to charge extraordinarily high interest rates. Currently, payday loans in Alaska can carry annual percentage rates ranging from nearly 195% to over 500%, trapping many borrowers in cycles of debt. These loans disproportionately affect Alaskans facing financial hardship, with over 15,000 residents taking out such loans each year, representing millions of dollars in wages flowing out of state to lenders headquartered elsewhere. In 2023 alone, more than 7,000 Alaskans borrowed more than \$17 million through payday loans.

Under SB 39, all small-dollar loans of \$25,000 or less—including payday loans—would be subject to the same 36% APR cap that applies to other lenders in Alaska. By ending this exemption, the bill aims to protect vulnerable Alaskans from predatory lending practices that often worsen financial insecurity. The legislation promotes fairness in lending and helps prevent further exploitation of those already facing economic challenges.

SENATE BILL 43 – ESTABLISHING MARCH AS WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH *by SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON*

[Senate Bill 43](#) officially designates March as Women’s History Month in Alaska. This legislation celebrates the vital contributions women have made to Alaska’s history, culture, and progress across all sectors—from government and science to the arts and community leadership. The bill highlights the historic strides in women’s representation, including the record number of women currently serving in the Alaska Legislature and the formation of the first Women in Alaska Legislature Group. By establishing Women’s History Month, Alaska creates an annual opportunity for schools, organizations, and communities to reflect on past achievements, recognize the ongoing impact of women leaders, and inspire future generations to continue advancing equality and leadership across the state.

SENATE BILL 47 – IMPROVING AND MAINTAINING ROADS THAT LEAD INTO CHUGACH STATE PARK *by SENATOR GIESSEL*

[Senate Bill 47](#) supports critical infrastructure improvements to improve access to Chugach State Park. The bill addresses a long-standing challenge: while local residents approved bond funding to upgrade roads like Canyon Road, a portion of these roads lies within the boundaries of state-owned parkland and cannot be improved using municipal funds alone. SB 47 clarifies that the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is responsible for maintaining public roads in the park and authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to grant municipalities easements or rights-of-way, enabling them to improve and maintain access routes.

With this new legal framework, municipalities can take on specific road improvement projects within the park—so long as public hearings are held and the DNR approves the easement—ensuring upgrades are made safely and efficiently. Ultimately, SB 47 empowers local governments to partner with the state to improve public access, trailhead connectivity, and safety for the more than 1.5 million annual visitors to Chugach State Park.

SENATE BILL 50 - ENCOURAGING LOCAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PLANS *by SENATOR DUNBAR*

[Senate Bill 50](#) aims to tackle Alaska’s growing housing crisis by encouraging local governments to integrate housing development plans into their required comprehensive planning processes. Recognizing that every community—urban and rural—faces rising housing costs, limited availability, and workforce shortages, the legislation seeks to prompt boroughs to evaluate their housing needs, review existing policies, and engage the public in discovering locally driven solutions. The bill specifically updates state law governing first- and second-class boroughs, encouraging them to make housing a distinct and intentional aspect of their long-term community planning.

While Senate Bill 50 does not mandate state intervention or specific policies, it broadens the state’s approach by promoting community-led planning and prioritization. By requiring municipalities to formally consider housing as part of their comprehensive plans, this bill supports the development of strategies that reflect local realities and needs. This process will assist communities in identifying barriers, setting priorities, and preparing for future state or private sector investments.

SENATE BILL 54 – INTERIOR DESIGN REGISTRATION AND OVERSIGHT OF DESIGN PROFESSIONS *by SENATOR CLAMAN. Co-Sponsors: Gray-Jackson*

[Senate Bill 54](#) extends the authorization of the State Board of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors for an additional eight years and includes Registered Interior Designers under the board’s jurisdiction for the first time. The legislation builds on the recommendations from the 2024 Sunset Audit, which determined that the board effectively serves the public interest. SB 54 establishes a new registration process for interior designers working on buildings open to the public, ensuring that these professionals meet safety and quality standards. By allowing qualified interior designers to submit their own construction documents for permitting, similar to practices in other states, SB 54 expands professional opportunities, supports small businesses, and increases consumer choice in Alaska’s design and construction industries, while maintaining existing safety and practice standards for other professionals such as architects, engineers, and contractors.

SENATE BILL 60 – ESTABLISHING MAY 12 AS MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS (ME) AWARENESS DAY *by SENATOR TOBIN*

[Senate Bill 60](#) designates May 12 as Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) Awareness Day in Alaska to raise public understanding of ME—also known as chronic fatigue syndrome—a serious and chronic neurological disease affecting millions of Americans, including children. ME/CFS severely disrupts multiple body systems, often resulting in lifelong disability, with 75% of patients unable to work or attend school and 25% confined to their homes or beds. Despite its widespread impact and a surge in diagnoses due to Long Covid—half of which meet ME/CFS criteria—approximately 90% of cases remain undiagnosed, and the condition remains underfunded and under-researched. Most U.S. medical schools do not include ME/CFS in their training, leaving physicians unprepared to diagnose or treat the illness. Recognizing May 12 aligns Alaska with international awareness efforts tied to Florence Nightingale’s legacy and aims to drive greater medical education, research investment, and the development of diagnostics and treatments.

SENATE BILL 77 / HOUSE BILL 75 - DIVIDEND DIVISION CLEANUP *by SENATOR KIEHL*

[Senate Bill 77](#) updates and simplifies Alaska’s Permanent Fund Dividend eligibility rules to better reflect the realities of modern life while improving the program's administration. The bill expands allowable absences for PFD eligibility to include time spent in merchant mariner training, treats academic-year breaks for college students as eligible absences, and removes strict limitations that penalize Alaskans for seeking out-of-state medical care on short notice. These changes aim to ensure that Alaskans aren’t unfairly disqualified from receiving their dividend for pursuing education, employment training, or urgent medical treatment outside the state.

To improve security and efficiency in the administration of the PFD program, SB 77 requires fingerprinting for employees of the Dividend Division who handle sensitive personal information. It also enhances fraud prevention by making the list of PFD applicants confidential and allows the division to send electronic levy notices to applicants who opt in—saving the state money on printing and postage. Together, these reforms strengthen the integrity of the program while making it more accessible and cost-effective for Alaskans.

*Senate Bill 77’s companion legislation, [House Bill 75](#), sponsored by Representative Jeremy Bynum, served as the vehicle that passed through the legislature.

SENATE BILL 95 – EXPANDING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE *by the SENATE HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE*

[Senate Bill 95](#) expands access to affordable childcare by increasing assistance for working families, encouraging business-supported childcare benefits through tax credits, and providing grants for high-quality providers. The bill raises income eligibility, limits family costs through a sliding fee scale, and requires providers to meet state quality standards while protecting against discrimination. With childcare shortages costing Alaska’s economy an estimated \$152 million annually, lawmakers described SB 95 as a workforce and

economic investment that helps more parents stay employed while improving access to care for families across the state. Key provisions in the bill include:

- **Employer Tax Credits:** Provides tax credits for employers who incur childcare expenses, whether in cash, equipment, or payments to employees, and increases the allowable deduction amount.
- **Business Support Services:** Adds a dedicated position to the Child Care Program Office to assist employers in implementing a childcare benefit for their employees.
- **Expanded Family Access:** Expands the number of families eligible for childcare assistance by raising income limits and increases the cap on the percentage of income a family spends on childcare.
- **Quality Provider Grants:** Provides an option for the Child Care Program Office to award grants to high-performing, high-quality childcare providers.
- **Sliding Fee Scale:** Requires the development of a sliding scale so families can gradually transition off assistance as their incomes rise.
- **Required Designations:** Requires facilities to be designated as a “quality childcare facility” by the Department of Family Services.
- **Non-Discrimination Protections:** Prohibits grant-funded providers from denying care based on disability or socioeconomic status.
- **Low-Income Priority:** Provides that low-income families will receive priority for the grant.

SENATE BILL 113 – DIGITAL CORPORATE TAX REFORM TO FUND STUDENT SUCCESS AND WORKFORCE PROGRAMS *by the SENATE RULES COMMITTEE*

[Senate Bill 113](#) modernizes Alaska’s corporate income tax system by adopting a “market-based sourcing” model and implementing a single-sales factor formula to determine corporate tax liability. This reform targets large digital corporations that sell to Alaska consumers but avoid paying state taxes due to a lack of physical presence in the state. By updating the tax code to reflect the realities of the digital economy, similar to tax structures already in use in 36 other states, SB 113 ensures that companies benefiting from Alaska’s infrastructure contribute fairly. The legislation does not raise taxes on Alaskans or local brick-and-mortar businesses and applies only to corporations deriving more than 50% of their Alaska sales through online or internet-based activity. The Department of Revenue estimates the bill could generate \$25–\$65 million annually in new revenue.

This newly generated revenue is directly tied to education policy reforms passed under House Bill 57. Two key components of that package—\$21.9 million in reading proficiency grants for K–6 students and an estimated \$10 million for expanding vocational and technical high school programs—are contingent upon SB 113 becoming law. Without the revenue from SB 113, these education initiatives will not be implemented. By ensuring fair taxation from large online corporations, SB 113 not only modernizes Alaska’s tax code but also provides the necessary funding to support Alaska’s schools.

SENATE BILL 115 / HOUSE BILL 116 – ALASKA-BASED INSURANCE COOPERATIVES FOR COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN *by the JOINT TASK FORCE ON ALASKA’S SEAFOOD INDUSTRY*

Senate Bill 115 allows commercial fishermen in Alaska to form cooperative insurance agreements without being subject to the state's insurance regulations under Title 21. The bill creates a legal carveout so that fishermen can pool resources and cover liability or vessel damage through a self-managed cooperative, rather than having to work through traditional insurers. Although similar insurance pools already exist, they are currently based in Washington State due to regulatory restrictions in Alaska law. HB 116 would enable Alaska-based cooperatives to form and operate under the same model.

The bill is a response to the rising cost and shrinking availability of insurance for Alaska’s commercial fishing fleet, which has faced mounting financial pressures from high operating costs and weak markets. Insurers have become more selective and have raised premiums on individual vessels, making coverage harder to obtain. By allowing insurance pooling, HB 116 offers fishermen a cost-effective, lower-risk option that can help stabilize the fleet and ensure continued access to essential liability coverage.

*Senate Bill 115’s companion legislation, [House Bill 116](#), sponsored by the Joint Task Force on Alaska’s Seafood Industry, served as the vehicle that passed through the legislature.

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

[Senate Bill 132](#) is an omnibus insurance reform bill that makes a broad range of updates to modernize Alaska’s insurance statutes, improve regulatory clarity, and strengthen consumer protections. Key provisions include simplifying the calculation of certain premium taxes, expanding the types of health insurance plans employers can offer, and allowing construction companies to self-insure multi-dwelling projects, reducing barriers to development. SB 132 also grants the Division of Insurance new authority to regulate extended warranties and oversee aircraft insurance rates, while correcting past statutory errors and refining licensing requirements.

SENATE BILL 133 – PRIOR AUTHORIZATIONS *by the SENATE LABOR & COMMERCE COMMITTEE*

[Senate Bill 133](#) enhances how health insurers manage “prior authorization” requests for medical treatments, procedures, and medications. The bill was developed through collaboration with patients, providers, insurers, and regulators to address long-standing concerns about delays and a lack of clarity in the prior authorization process. SB 133 establishes clear timelines for insurer responses, sets communication standards, and outlines procedures for handling incomplete or adverse determinations. It also encourages the use of secure electronic systems to improve efficiency and safeguard patient information, making the process easier for both providers and patients.

Additionally, SB 133 provides specific guidelines for managing prior authorizations for chronic conditions, including how long authorizations remain valid and how renewals should be handled. The bill also includes provisions to speed up treatment approvals for patients with advanced metastatic cancer by limiting step therapy barriers. To ensure transparency and accountability, SB 133 requires the Division of Insurance to report annually on the program's performance and gives the division authority to monitor and enforce compliance.

SENATE BILL 146 / HOUSE BILL 174 – REAA FUND: MT. EDGECUMBE, 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 statewide.

*Senate Bill 146's companion legislation, [House Bill 174](#), sponsored by Representative Robin Burke, served as the vehicle that passed through the legislature.

SENATE BILL 156 – TEMPORARY FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO STABILIZE COMMERCIAL FISHING LOAN ACCESS by the JOINT LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON EVALUATING ALASKA'S SEAFOOD INDUSTRY

[Senate Bill 156](#) provides temporary financial relief for Alaska's struggling commercial fishing industry by supporting parity in lending rates between state and private lenders. In 2024, lawmakers approved a reduced interest rate of 5.25% for the state's Commercial Fishing Revolving Loan Fund to assist small fishing businesses. However, this change unintentionally harmed the Alaska Commercial Fishing and Agriculture Bank (CFAB), a state-chartered institution that serves fishing families with larger, long-term loans. Unable to compete with the lower state rates, CFAB experienced a significant loss in loan activity.

SB 156 provides a temporary solution by authorizing a one-time transfer of funds from a defunct state loan program to assist CFAB in offering similar low-interest loans for the next two years. After that time, CFAB must return any unused funds and repay the remainder over 20 years. This temporary assistance was recommended by the Joint Legislative Task Force Evaluating Alaska's Seafood Industry and is intended to maintain CFAB as a financial resource for Alaska's private sector economy.

SENATE BILL 183 – LEGISLATIVE ACCESS TO STATE AGENCY DATA FOR OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY *by the SENATE RULES COMMITTEE*

[Senate Bill 183](#) clarifies and reinforces the authority of Alaska's Legislative Budget and Audit Committee (LB&A) and Legislative Audit to obtain necessary information from state agencies in the form and format requested. The bill mandates that all state agencies must fully cooperate with the LB&A and DLA, including assembling, generating, or furnishing information as specified. This ensures that the legislature can effectively perform audits and maintain oversight of executive branch agencies.

The need for SB 183 arose when the Department of Revenue declined to compile necessary oil and gas tax audit assessment data, asserting that current law did not require it to prepare or format that necessary information and provide it to the legislature. This departure from longstanding precedent limited the legislature's ability to conduct thorough oversight. By clarifying the legislature's authority to obtain information in the required format, SB 183 aims to prevent executive agencies from setting their own terms for transparency and accountability, thereby safeguarding the public's interest in an open and effective government.

SENATE RESOLUTION 3 – URGING CONGRESS TO GRANT VOTING AND MILITARY OFFICER RIGHTS TO AMERICAN SAMOANS *by SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI. Co-Sponsors: Gray-Jackson, Dunbar, Tobin, Kawasaki, Claman*

[Senate Resolution 3](#) urges Congress to grant United States nationals from American Samoa the right to serve as commissioned officers in the U.S. military and to vote in federal elections. Despite being U.S. nationals with a long history of military service and civic contributions, American Samoans are the only residents of a U.S. territory who are not granted citizenship at birth, which prevents them from voting for President, Congress, or serving as commissioned officers. The resolution highlights American Samoa's unmatched military enlistment rate and the significant population of Samoan descent living in the United States, calling on Congress to extend full democratic rights and military career opportunities to these loyal U.S. nationals.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 7 / HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 4 - MAINTAIN DENALI AS THE OFFICIAL NAME *by SENATOR KAWASAKI. Co-Sponsors: Wielechowski, Dunbar, Tobin, Kiehl, Gray-Jackson, Claman*

[Senate Joint Resolution 7](#) reaffirms *Denali* as the official and rightful name of North America's tallest peak. Known to the Koyukon Athabascan people as "The High One," Denali serves as a cultural and natural symbol recognized worldwide. Although the name Denali was officially adopted by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names in 2015, following a 1975 request by the State of Alaska, SJR 7 reasserts the state's support for preserving this historic and culturally significant name.

Denali holds deep meaning for Alaska Native communities and is embraced by Alaskans of all backgrounds as a reflection of the state's rich cultural heritage. With millions visiting Alaska each year to experience its landscapes and traditions, the name Denali has become a global symbol of Alaska's identity. The resolution sends a clear message that the people of Alaska overwhelmingly support maintaining Denali as the mountain's official name, respecting the region's indigenous heritage and the state's cultural legacy.

*Senate Joint Resolution 7's companion legislation, [House Joint Resolution 4](#) sponsored by Representative Maxine Dibert, served as the vehicle that passed through the legislature.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 8 – REAFFIRMING ALASKA-TAIWAN PARTNERSHIP *by SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON*

[Senate Joint Resolution 8](#) reaffirms Alaska's commitment to strengthening its relationship with Taiwan through expanded economic, cultural, and educational partnerships. As Alaska's eighth-largest export market and a significant consumer of the state's seafood products, Taiwan plays a key role in Alaska's economy. The resolution highlights sister-city relationships between Fairbanks, Juneau, Anchorage, and cities in Taiwan, and supports reopening an Alaska Trade Office in Taiwan to boost trade, technology, education, and tourism ties. It also expresses support for Taiwan's participation in international organizations like the World Health Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization, reinforcing Alaska's dedication to fostering global cooperation and mutual economic growth.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 9 / HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 11 – RECOGNIZING ALASKA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CANADA *by SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ARCTIC AFFAIRS*

[Senate Joint Resolution 9](#) recognizes the vital relationship between Alaska and Canada and reaffirms the importance of maintaining open, cooperative trade and transportation channels between the two. The resolution highlights the long-standing economic, defense, cultural, and environmental ties shared by Alaska and its Arctic neighbor. From joint military partnerships and disaster response to billions in cross-border trade and thousands of jobs dependent on Canadian imports and exports, the resolution underscores that

Alaska's geographic isolation makes its relationship with Canada essential to the state's economy and security.

SJR 9 also acknowledges the importance of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), negotiated in 2018, which continues to facilitate robust trade across North America. Lawmakers expressed concern that recent federal policy discussions could threaten Alaska's access to essential materials and markets through Canada, potentially undermining the state's resource development and economic stability. The resolution urges the federal government to avoid any restrictive trade measures that could harm Alaska's unique partnership with Canada and calls for continued cooperation to advance the mutual interests of both regions in trade, security, and Arctic development.

*Senate Joint Resolution 9's companion legislation, [House Joint Resolution 11](#) sponsored by Representative Chuck Kopp, served as the vehicle that passed through the legislature.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 10 – HONORING HMONG VIETNAM VETERANS *by SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI. Co-Sponsors Gray-Jackson, Kawasaki, Dunbar, Tobin*

[Senate Joint Resolution 10](#) urges the United States Congress to award the Congressional Gold Medal to the Hmong veterans of the Vietnam War. These veterans, recruited by the CIA as part of a covert mission known as the "Secret War," served alongside American forces in Laos, gathering intelligence, disrupting enemy operations, and rescuing U.S. pilots, often at great personal risk. Despite their courage and sacrifice, the contributions of these veterans have gone largely unrecognized on the national stage, and this resolution calls on Congress to correct that by granting them one of the nation's highest civilian honors.

More than 50,000 Hmong veterans now live in the United States, including members of Alaska's own Hmong community who continue to enrich the state's culture and economy. Alaska previously recognized these veterans by establishing May 15 as Hmong-American Veterans Day, but SJR 10 takes that recognition a step further by advocating for the Congressional Gold Medal. Honoring Hmong veterans is not only a long-overdue acknowledgment of their service but also a reflection of Alaska's ongoing commitment to honoring veterans who have defended freedom alongside American service members.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 12 – URGING FEDERAL ACTION TO RESTORE AND MAINTAIN CRITICAL MARINE WEATHER BUOYS *by SENATOR DUNBAR*

[Senate Joint Resolution 12](#) urges the federal government to restore and maintain reliable service for Alaska's network of National Data Buoy Center meteorological stations. These buoys provide real-time data critical for safe navigation and weather forecasting in Alaska's coastal waters, assisting mariners in deciding when it is safe to leave or return to harbor. Of particular concern is the Seal Rocks Buoy in Prince William Sound, which has been offline since October 2024. This buoy is essential for the U.S. Coast Guard to assess sea conditions at Hinchinbrook Entrance, the critical passage for oil tankers departing the Alyeska

Terminal in Valdez. Without it, mariners and regulators are forced to rely on less reliable, distant data, raising the risk of a catastrophic oil spill.

SJR 12 highlights the serious safety and environmental risks posed by the buoy outages, including the potential for a disaster similar to the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The resolution calls on NOAA and Congress to prioritize funding and maintenance for these vital safety systems to protect Alaska's fisheries, environment, and coastal communities. Lawmakers stressed that while federal budgets are tight, ensuring the operability of weather buoys is a critical investment in public safety, environmental stewardship, and economic protection. SJR 12 will be transmitted to Alaska's congressional delegation and NOAA to advocate for immediate action.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 15 – OPPOSE FEDERAL CUTS TO MEDICAID by the *SENATE HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE*

[Senate Joint Resolution 15](#) urges Alaska's congressional delegation to oppose proposed federal cuts to Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). More than 250,000 Alaskans—including children, seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income adults—depend on these programs for access to essential health care. Medicaid plays a particularly critical role in rural and remote communities, where health care is often harder to access and more expensive. It also supports Alaska's Tribal health care system, covers nearly 100,000 children, and pays for almost 40 percent of all births in the state. With federal funds covering 78 percent of Alaska's \$2 billion Medicaid program, cuts of nearly \$880 billion over ten years would force the state to make painful decisions about reducing services, cutting benefits, or limiting provider payments.

SJR 15 highlights that the damage from such cuts would go far beyond health care access. Medicaid supports thousands of jobs, helps small businesses provide coverage to their employees, and ensures that vulnerable Alaskans can live with dignity in their homes and communities. Slashing federal Medicaid funding would threaten these economic and social benefits, putting lives, livelihoods, and the stability of Alaska's health care system at risk.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 16 – URGING CONGRESS TO PASS THE ENSURING LASTING SMILES ACT by *SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON*

[Senate Joint Resolution 16](#) urges Congress to pass the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act to guarantee insurance coverage for medically necessary treatments for individuals born with congenital anomalies such as cleft lip and palate. Currently, many families face significant financial barriers because private insurance often excludes or limits coverage for essential medical and dental procedures. The federal legislation would require private health insurance plans to cover surgeries, therapies, and related treatments without lifetime or annual limits, ensuring families are not forced to choose between financial hardship and their children's health. SJR 16 expresses Alaska's support for this national effort to provide equitable and comprehensive care for individuals living with congenital conditions.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 17 – RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENERGY COUNCIL *by SENATOR STEDMAN. Co-Sponsors: Giessel, Stevens*

[Senate Joint Resolution 17](#) recognizes the 50th anniversary of The Energy Council and honors its decades of work advancing energy policy collaboration among states, provinces, and nations. Established in 1975 as a nonpartisan forum for state legislators, the Council began with five southern states and has since grown to include members from across the United States and Canada, including Alaska, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. The resolution celebrates the Council's efforts to promote reliable and affordable energy as the foundation for economic stability, its role in educating lawmakers on emerging energy trends, and its contributions to federal energy and environmental policy.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 18 / HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 15 - STATEWIDE WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION EFFORTS *by the SENATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE*

[Senate Joint Resolution 18](#) urges state, local, and federal leaders to prioritize wildfire preparedness as Alaska faces increasingly severe and destructive fire seasons. Citing higher temperatures, reduced precipitation, and growing risks to communities like Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai, and Soldotna, the resolution calls for the immediate development of wildfire response plans, expansion of public education on fire risks, and investment in improved fire suppression tools and early warning systems. Lawmakers stressed that advanced detection technologies, better evacuation planning, and enhanced interagency coordination are all critical to protecting Alaskan lives, property, and natural resources.

SJR 18 emphasizes that wildfire preparedness is no longer a seasonal issue but a long-term priority that requires proactive, year-round action. The resolution warns that Alaska is vulnerable to the same scale of wildfire devastation recently seen in other states like California, Oregon, and even the tragic fires in Hawaii. By calling on the Governor, state agencies, local governments, and Alaska's congressional delegation to strengthen wildfire mitigation and response strategies, the legislature seeks to safeguard Alaska's communities, economy, and environment from the escalating threat of wildfires.

*Senate Joint Resolution 18's companion legislation, [House Joint Resolution 15](#) sponsored by Representative Ky Holland, served as the vehicle that passed through the legislature.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 19 – URGING CONGRESS TO HONOR 90/10 REVENUE SPLIT FOR ANWR AND NPR-A DEVELOPMENT *by SENATOR BJORKMAN Co-Sponsors: Merrick, Giessel, Stedman, Hoffman, Kawasaki, Wielechowski, Olson*

[Senate Joint Resolution 19](#) urges Congress to honor the state's 90-percent revenue share promised in the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958 for oil and gas production on federal lands, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), and to extend that same

commitment to the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). The resolution highlights how Alaska's ability to fund public services and infrastructure has been limited by federal control over large portions of its resource-rich North Slope and by tax write-offs claimed by oil companies operating on federal lands. Lawmakers argue that fulfilling the 90/10 revenue split would help Alaska support necessary infrastructure, maximize the state's economic potential, and provide essential services to its residents as the state looks to expand petroleum and mineral production under recent federal initiatives.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 21 / HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 25 – RECRUITING AND RETAINING TEACHERS THROUGH J-1 AND H-1B VISAS *by SENATOR TOBIN. Co-Sponsor: Giessel*

[Senate Joint Resolution 21](#) supports the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers through the J-1 and H-1B visa programs to help address the state's teacher shortages, particularly in rural and remote communities. The resolution highlights how international educators on J-1 exchange visitor visas and H-1B employment visas fill critical teaching roles in subjects such as science, math, and special education, while also enriching Alaska's classrooms with cultural diversity. Expanding access to these programs is essential to ensuring students across Alaska receive a high-quality education, regardless of where they live, by keeping classrooms staffed with skilled educators when local recruitment falls short.

*Senate Joint Resolution 21's companion legislation, [House Joint Resolution 25](#), sponsored by Representative Genevieve Mina, served as the vehicle that passed through the legislature.