



# Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

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## *Representative Gara Highlights Priorities on 100<sup>th</sup> Day*

JUNEAU – House and Senate Democratic legislators today held a press conference to mark the 100th day of the 23rd Alaska State Legislature. The lawmakers stood shoulder to shoulder and emphasized a united commitment to full funding for public education, reiterated Democrats' pledge to protect the Permanent Fund Dividend, and highlighted the importance of building an Alaska natural gas pipeline.

Representative Les Gara (D-Anchorage) has worked to focus attention on some of his priority legislation: requiring a paper trail for voting machines, closing oil tax loopholes, and bolstering state consumer protection enforcement.

House Bill 459 requires a paper trail for voting machines. "Citizen trust in elections is a bedrock of democracy," said Representative Gara. "But new voting equipment in Alaska produces no paper trail to audit. I am calling for voting machines to produce paper receipts that voters can verify before leaving the polling booth. That will protect us from the vagaries of computer chips and software."

House Bill 441 calls for a modification of the state's Economic Limiting Factor (ELF) oil severance tax regime. "The Alaska Constitution requires that we 'maximize' the revenue received by the state for our oil resources," said Representative Gara. "This bill puts us back on track to meet our constitutional obligations. As things stand today, no matter how high oil prices go, 150,000 barrels of oil will leave the state paying effectively a zero-percent production tax."

House Bill 56 bolsters state consumer protection enforcement by forcing those who commit business fraud to fund it. "This bill strengthens the state's ability to represent Alaskans who have been victimized by fraudulent business practices," said Gara. "And it does so while actually saving the state money by allowing the state to recover not only the existing penalties that are available under state law, but it's enforcement costs. HB56 will help fund a more vibrant, more cost-effective consumer protection presence in Alaska."

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Sen. Bettye Davis, Sen. Johnny Ellis, Sen. Kim Elton, Sen. Lyman Hoffman, Sen. Hollis French, Sen. Gretchen Guess, Sen. Georgianna Lincoln, Sen. Donny Olson, Rep. Ethan Berkowitz, Rep. Sharon Cissna, Rep. Harry Crawford, Rep. Eric Croft, Rep. Les Gara, Rep. Max Gruenberg, Rep. David Guttenberg, Rep. Reggie Joule, Rep. Mary Kapsner, Rep. Beth Kerttula, Rep. Albert Kookesh, Rep. Carl Moses