



Alaska State Legislature
House and Senate
Democrats

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DEMOCRATS PROGRESS TOWARD SESSION GOALS
Work continues toward Safer, Healthier, Smarter, Richer Alaska

JUNEAU – At the close of the Twenty-Fourth Regular Legislative Session, Legislative Democrats are pleased with the progress they've made creating a safer, healthier, smarter and richer Alaska. As Democrats complete a productive session, progress has been toward each of those goals.

"The Democratic Caucus worked extremely hard toward our goals this session," said Senate Democratic Leader Johnny Ellis (D-Anchorage). "The entire caucus pushed to improve the quality of life and create opportunities in Alaska, and Alaskans can be proud of the effort Democratic legislators delivered. There's no limit to the successes we'll achieve for Alaska and Alaskans, given the opportunity."

Safer

Democrats helped to make Alaska safer with initiatives to protect vulnerable Alaskans through tougher laws for child sex offenders and sex traffickers, and put a microscope on those seeking to steal Alaskans' identities. Sen. Gretchen Guess (D-Anchorage) successfully imposed tougher sentences on those who prey on children. Guess' SB 223, increasing penalties for those who prey on children, was incorporated into SB 218 and together they were passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the governor.

Additionally, Democrats have worked to ensure Alaska is prepared for any natural disasters that may occur within the state, as well as to provide safe roads and communities for Alaskans.

Healthier

Alaska's Democrats pushed to ensure that Alaskans live healthier lives, and have access to the best possible level of health care. Rep. Ethan Berkowitz (D-Anchorage) created a statewide health commission to find ways to provide public health care while reducing costs to Alaskans and Alaska businesses. In addition, Democrats introduced legislation to provide access to affordable prescription medication, as well as to make sure all Alaskan children have adequate health insurance.

Rep. Sharon Cissna (D-Anchorage) and Sen. Donny Olson (D-Nome) headed up the Legislative Health Caucus, expanding the dialogue and identifying solutions to some of the most critical challenges facing Alaskans.

Smarter

Education always has been at the top of the Democratic priorities. Democrats fought hard to ensure all Alaskans receive the highest quality education possible, from pre-kindergarten through the university level and beyond.

In keeping with long-standing Democratic commitments to enact legislation that actually reaches classrooms, the

Legislature kept pushing until the per-student allocation rose from \$4,576 to \$4,919 and increased overall funding for K-12 education by \$131 million.

Reps Les Gara (D-Anchorage) and David Guttenberg (D-Fairbanks) provided a comprehensive education package designed to provide better levels of education for Alaska.

Other specific accomplishments included \$250,000 for a pre-K task force called Ready to Learn and funding for the Integrated Science Center at the University of Alaska. Democrats helped ensure that the vocational education needs of adult Alaskans were met, and that all Alaskans have access to the training necessary for tomorrow's jobs.

Richer

From the beginning of the session, Democrats called for at least half the budget surplus, about \$700 million be saved for the future. The Democratic plan was to place the money into one of the state's true savings accounts, creating long-term fiscal security for the state. That plan was rejected by the Republicans on a party line vote.

Democrats also fought to restore municipal revenue sharing ever since Governor Murkowski ended the program in 2002. His veto then forced municipalities to raise property taxes to meet the demand of unfunded mandates and made smaller communities reduce or discontinue critical services. This year the Legislature finally moved on the Democratic call to provide significant community dividends that reduced the economic burdens on all Alaska communities.




Democrats were successful in passing legislation to create a Climate Impact Assessment Commission, sponsored by Rep. Reggie Joule (D-Kotzebue) and spearheaded on the Senate side by Sen. Donny Olson (D-Nome) to address the potential impacts that climate change will have on Alaskan businesses and communities.

Additionally, Democrats have worked toward goals to ensure that Alaskans remain financially secure for many years to come. Primarily, this has come in the form of ensuring that Alaskans receive a fair share of the revenues from the State's abundant natural resource wealth, particularly our oil wealth.

While this session has been dominated by work on the Petroleum Production Tax, Democrats have led the charge to reform a broken oil tax regime for several years. The caucus was pleased with the vigorous debate this session, but Democrats remained concerned that there are still forces in Alaska government trying to tip the revenue scales in big oil's favor.

Now, with the work of the regular session complete, Democrats are working hard in special session to ensure the state actually gets a gas pipeline that secures our financial future without giving away oil and gas owned by Alaskans.

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