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Lawmakers get second chance at Longevity Bonus Guttenberg files bill to reinstate program for Alaska seniors

FAIRBANKS – As lawmakers prepare to return to session in January, Representative David Guttenberg (D-Fairbanks) has crafted legislation to reinstate the Alaska Longevity Bonus program. Guttenberg hopes to reverse the impact of Governor Frank Murkowski's veto of the program.

"Even before Governor Murkowski cut Alaska seniors' Longevity Bonus, it was clear to a majority of legislators that killing the program was bad public policy," says Guttenberg. "I think the legislature will jump at the chance to put things right."

The bill is different from a veto override, says Guttenberg, and will require a 50-50 vote in the House and Senate. Senator Hollis French (D-Anchorage) will introduce an identical bill in the Senate. The Democratic lawmakers express hope for bipartisan cooperation in putting this controversial budget issue to rest.

"Alaskans from all political stripes have been quite clear. Balancing the state's budget by cutting the Longevity Bonus remains an unacceptable option," says Guttenberg.

The Fairbanks lawmaker noted that Murkowski has "thrown the ball back in our court," referring to the governor's challenge to the legislature to find ways to extend a needs-based, one-time senior aid program.

"There is no question in my mind. Preserving the Longevity Bonus is far superior to creating a new welfare program," says Guttenberg.

Co-sponsors from the House and Senate Democratic caucuses join Guttenberg and French in this effort.

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