



Reps Al Kookesh, Reggie Joule, Mary Sattler Kapsner & Ethan Berkowitz discuss issues on the House floor

# NEWS FROM *MARY*

## Representative Mary Sattler Kapsner

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## 2000 Legislative Session Highlights



### PCE Gets Long Term Funding

The true highlight of the 2000 Legislative Session was most assuredly the work that went into finding a long term funding source for the Power Cost Equalization Program. Entering this legislative year we faced a three part problem in PCE funding:

First, supplemental funding was needed to carry us through our current fiscal year. You may remember a prior year when shortfunding for the program resulted in prorating payments. We did succeed in getting funds to carry us through this year.

Second, a full \$15.7 million needed to be identified for the coming fiscal year. In the Fiscal Year 01 budget we've made headway, but we will have to come back for supplemental funding next legislative session.

Third, and our most important goal, was long term funding. With the passage of HB 446 and HB 447 which authorized sale of the Four Dam Pool and a draw of \$100 million from the Constitutional Budget Reserve Fund, we are on our way to establishing a PCE Endowment which will be invested and the earnings used to fund the program.

The earnings of the PCE Endowment Fund will take a little time to fully kick in, so Bush legislators will have to continue to negotiate a portion of the program cost for a few years. We are, however, closer to solving the PCE funding issue than we've ever been before.

It has been my privilege and honor to be part of the Bush Caucus team, working with Senator Hoffman and retiring Senator Al Adams and House Bush Caucus Chair Representative Reggie Joule as we fought for PCE funding.

We all applaud Senator Adams, in particular, for his negotiating skills. While we will all miss him next year as he retires from legislative service, all of rural Alaska will forever be in his debt for his leadership in this important issue.



### School Construction: A Beginning

The neglect of rural school construction and maintenance needs by the legislature in recent years has driven problems of overcrowding, aging buildings, and routine maintenance to crisis proportions. The *Kasayulie* lawsuit put the issue of school construction and major maintenance needs in rural Alaska into the public and political limelight.

With the passage of two bills, HB 281 and HB 287, new schools will be funded in four schools in the AVCP/Bristol Bay Regions. I'm disappointed we didn't get more, but I feel good to have been part of the Democratic Caucus that drove this issue in the legislature. With the bond package passed this year a number of critical projects will have moved off the list, putting our other needs in a good position for next year's funding efforts.

It will be critical for next year's legislature continue to work off the priority list, getting us past #6 on the school construction list and to begin to seriously address the major maintenance backlog.

### State Employee Contracts

A third major issue driving this session was state employee contracts. Funding of the contracts brought us back to special session.

The good news for employees in our district is that the legislature did ratify and fund the first of the three year contracts negotiated by the administration. The contracts were also a major priority for the Democratic Caucus.

### Mary's Fishermen's Tax Obligation Loan Bill Becomes Law

HB 238, by Rep. Kapsner, passed the Legislature by a large majority--with 7 senators joining to co-sponsor the bill as the legislature closed down--and has been signed into law.

The bill reinstitutes a successful program of a few years back which authorized loans to qualifying fishermen to pay IRS debt. The original program successfully helped 288 fishermen and saved many limited entry permits from the threat of seizure by the IRS.