



NEWS FROM *MARY*

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Community Health and Safety Priorities - How Did we Fare?

Being a movie buff of sorts, I've notice how a catchy movie title can impart special meaning when reporting on legislative issues. This year the Democratic caucus put out a paper they termed "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly." While most of that issue paper talked about education, the first thing that title brought to my mind was the failure of the urban-led Legislative Majority to support the Governor's request of \$600,000 to fund a 15% salary increase for VPSO's. We must make this a priority for next year!

We're not doing well in the funding of public safety in rural Alaska, and a major rural lawsuit, *AITC v. State*, makes precisely that point. Filed last fall in the Dillingham Superior Court, the lawsuit charges that the state has been discriminatory in the way it provides police protection. It asks the court, in part, for an injunction, prohibiting the state from using federal funds for law enforcement until an acceptable statewide plan has been adopted. The suit is ongoing, and it is an issue we should all be watching.

Safe Boating

HB 108 by Rep. Hudson creates a state safe boating and education program. It establishes the Alaska Boating Safety Advisory Council, and makes the state eligible for federal boating safety funding.

Representatives from the Coast Guard visited my office prior to the bill coming up for a vote. The impact on rural areas should be minimal in terms of requirements for licensing, reporting, and safety equipment. The real difference is expected to come as the state develops Alaska-specific boating safety educational programs. With the high numbers of water accidents and tragedies in rural Alaska, I am hopeful the legislation will have a positive impact.

Village Safe Water Funding

Thanks to changes in federal law related to the state dollars required for matching matching federal village safe water and sanitation projects we've been able to make a significant step forward in meeting village needs. Nearly \$50 million in state and federal spending was authorized in this year's capital budget.

The AVCP and Bristol Bay regions will see funding for **village safe water studies** in *Alakanuk, Aleknagik, Bethel, Crooked Creek, Ekwok, Emmonak, Kasigluk, St. George, St. Mary's, and Twin Hills*. Project funding will go to *Akiachak, Bethel, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kipnuk, Kotlik, Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Marshall, Napakiak, Nunapitchuk, Pedro Bay, Pilot Station, Quinhagak, Tununak and Tuntutuliak*.



Nastasia Wahlberg stopped in the office while she was in Juneau on business for ONC and the Bethel Regional Social Services Planning Committee.

Through BRSSPC individual agencies were able to pool their needs and requests into one cohesive presentation. The legislative packet, shared with other offices as well, gave legislators outside our district a snapshot of local organizations and long term goals.

I had a great visit with Paul Nanok and Eric Holland when they were in Juneau representing the Dillingham Alliance.

I'm always glad to see people like Eric and Paul making the rounds of legislative offices because it is difficult for urban legislators to understand the extra challenges facing Alaskans who live in villages, miles from services their urban constituents have access to.



A visit from Robert Clark, Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation, gave me a chance to catch up on local news and some of the local health issues.

The Department of Health and Social Services funds a number of services through grants issued to Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation and the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation. I'm always interested to hear how the relationship between our health corporations and the department is going and where our corporations see need for improvement.