

Alaska State Legislature
House of Representatives
Minority Leader



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News from Juneau

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Greetings from Juneau where the Conference Committee that irons out differences between House and Senate budgets began its work in earnest this week. The conferees are Senators Parnell, Torgerson, and Adams joined by Representatives Mulder, Therriault, and Grussendorf. On Wednesday, May 5 (tomorrow), they will determine funding levels between the House and Senate numbers for the Departments of Administration, Corrections, Fish & Game, and Law. Other departments will be scheduled daily. If you need further information about the budget be sure to contact my office as it is a "moving target."

In the meantime, the Alaska Municipal League was in town late last week and reiterated its opposition to the Majority's cuts to Municipal Assistance and Revenue Sharing, which will translate into higher property taxes and diminished local services. In a speech to AML on April 30, I explained that, while restoring cuts to Municipal Assistance and Revenue Sharing is a priority for the Minority, our highest priority is a long-term fiscal plan. I then reiterated the House Minority intention that we would not vote to tap Alaska's saving account (the Constitutional Budget Reserve) without a long-term plan.

In other news, eight other legislators and I introduced House Bill 215 – Restoring the Renters' Rebate Program, which was zeroed out in both the House and Senate budgets. Renters' Rebate provides approximately \$277 per year to roughly 993 seniors and 112 disabled veterans. Less than a week after introduction, HB 215 passed from the House Community & Regional Affairs committee and is now in the House Finance committee. I have requested a hearing there. The sponsor statement is on the web at:

<http://www.akdemocrats.org/bios/ebpics/hb215ss.pdf>

As we move closer to adjournment, just two weeks away, the pace will become more hectic. As one of our neighbors, who happens to be a lobbyist, often says, "Lobbyists earn 90% of their pay in the last week of session." I will continue doing everything I can to keep you informed.

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